SHORT DURATION DISCUSSION

Situation Arising Our of Price Rise in the Country — (Contd.)

DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY (Andhra Pradesh): Sir, my good friend, Shri Manohar Joshi, for whom I have great respect, spoke for 45 minutes, but in his 45-minute speech he had forgotton to tell one important thing, i.e. what is the magic or the miracle to control inflation. He had said that after the defeat of the NDA Government, or when our Government came to power, in a month's time, inflation went up.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I hope that you will do the miracle!

DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY: Sir, Mr. Chidambaram is going to do the miracle. ..*(Interruptions)*.. Sir, he said, "In a month's time, inflation goes up!" It is very surprising. How can a senior Member like him say that? How can it happen in a month's time, Sir? It is not at all laudable. He has also said that there is a gross mismanagement of the financial system by the present Government. Sir, this is totally wrong. I am going to convince the House by stating as to how the present Government is functioning, how the economy is growing so well, what is the growth of the economy and how the nation is progressing at a higher pace. There is no doubt about it that the Government is concerned, we are all concerned, about inflation, but, at the same time, Sir, it is beyond our control. We must not forget that we cannot do magic; we are not God. We must go as per the law of the nature. We have been facing three problems. One is erratic monsoon. The second is drought. Last year, there was a drought; this year also, there has been a drought. Last year, the monsoon was not good. This year, also, the monsoon was not good. Thirdly, the oil prices have gone up. Sir, the oil prices have gone up, but Mr. Manohar Joshi did not take into account the full details.

MR. CHAIRMAN: He is Murli Manohar Joshi; not Manohar Joshi

DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY: He is Murli Manohar Joshi only, but, as a shortcut, I said 'Manohar Joshi' ! Murli Manohar Joshiji was saying that during the time of NDA Government also the oil price had gone up and now also it must have gone up. He was asking, "How does it affect the inflation?". The first point is how the inflation is affected. Inflation is different from the real

life. The common man is bothered about the price of fruits, vegetables, oils, rice, wheat, electrical goods and all these things. You will be happy to know that the price of none of these products has gone up. For example, if you look at the food articles, it was 1.13 per cent in September, 2003 and now there is only a marginal increase of 0.31 per cent. In the case of foodgrains, it was 2.21 per cent in September, 2003, and it has come down to 1.07 per cent in 2004. In the case of oil-seeds it was 16.29 per cent in April-September, 2003 and it has fallen to 11 per cent in 2004. In the case of food products it has fallen from 8.63 per cent to 5.05 per cent. Why don't they understand this? Like this, if you go through the facts and figures, the price of the most important food products, vegetables and all these things has fallen. In the case of chilly, onion, mustard oil, safety matches, gram, soaps, masoor, kerosene, etc., in fact, there is negative trend. There are a few items like atta, mutton, rice, urad, wheat, vanaspati, arhar, milk, moong, etc., where there is below 5 per cent inflation. Therefore, we have to bear in mind that, as far as factual information is concerned, there is absolutely not much inflation, as the people are making a noise. But there is a little inflation which we have to control. In August, the inflation was 8.5 per cent. It has now come down to 7.3 per cent.

Secondly, internationally the oil price has gone up to 56 dollars per barrel. But we are charging only 40 dollars per barrel. Our price has gone up from 31 dollars per barrel to 40 dollars per barrel during April-August. Though the price has gone up from 31 dollars to 40 dollars per barrel, the Government exchequer has borne Rs. 4,400 crores and the Government has made the oil companies to bear a loss of Rs. 20,000 crores. In other words, the Government has not put the entire burden on the people of India because of the increase in the international oil price. Though the price has gone up to 56 dollars— of course, it fell down to 51 dollars per barrel—the burden is borne by the oil companies and the Government and they give it to the people at 40 dollars per barrel. So, the people should know the statistics. The people are simply saying that the oil price has been increased now and you should not increase the price of diesel and petrol again. The Government has increased the price bearing in mind the interest of the common man and it is trying to bear it to the maximum extent and subsequently the balance is actually passed on to the public.

We must also bear in mind how the economy is growing. Actually, the economy, the inflation, the prices of common products, etc., are very

much interlinked. If the inflation is affecting the country's GDP growth, economic growth, industrial growth, etc., we must not expect this kind of growth. For instance, the production of pertroleum products has increased from 5.2 per cent to 7 per cent. It has gone up from 5.2 per cent during the NDA Government to 7 per cent now. The coal production has gone up from 2.9 per cent to 7.3 per cent. The corporate results are outstanding. The July-September quarter results show 22 per cent increase in the profits. It means that, if the corporate results show this kind of an increase, there will be much more industrial growth and much more potential for employment.

The software sector is also moving up. In fact, last year the software sector was in a very bad shape. Now, during our Government's time, it has seen a boom. Similar is the case with the automobile industry. They are making phenomenal sales now. It has not happened in the last three or four years. It also shows how much prosperity is there in the country. The foreign investors are actually pumping billions into the stock market because they have got confidence in the present Government. The investors from all over the world are inspired to come and invest in the Indian industry, under the Indian economy. They are encouraged and inspired by our present system, industrial policy and fiscal system. It shows that this Government is very strong and it is taking pains to see that the country prospers further. At the same time, we have to keep in mind the Wholesale Price Index and the Consumer Price Index. In the Wholesale Price Index the rate of inflation was 8.7 per cent and 7.5 per cent respectively. Frankly, the Wholesale Price Index has got very little impact on the common man in the country. That is what we have to bear in mind. The Wholesale Price Index consists of various items like metals, minerals, petrochemicals, steel sector, cement sector, etc. All these things are included in the Wholesale Price Index. But in the Consumer Price Index, we find the real increase in the consumer items; in other words, in essential commodities and consumer goods. Actually, in the Consumer Price Index, last year the inflation rate was 3.3 per cent. This year it is 4.6 per cent only. It means only 1.3 per cent is the increase in the Consumer Price Index. Therefore, my friends must bear in mind that if they go deep into it and see how much impact of inflation is there on the common man, they would come to a conclusion that it is not that much adverse as they are thinking. Naturally, they would want to know whether the Finance Ministry or the Finance Minister or the UPA Government is really making efforts to control inflation.

Yes, they are very much concerned about inflation. When the inflation rate had gone up to 8.8 per cent in August, they were all worried. Fortunately, it has come down to 7.3 per cent. Perhaps it will go down further in the near future. How? They are making efforts. They will make the oil companies to bear something. The Exchequer is also making efforts. They have reduced import duty on various products. In August, 2004, the Government reduced the customs duty on non-alloy steel from 15 per cent to 10 per cent. In order to check high inflation rate, the metal scrap of iron steel was fully exempted from customs duty. These are the measures that the Government has taken to control the rate of inflation. Then the most important point is to check liquidity. If you don't check liquidity, the finance system will collapse. Dr. Murli Manohar Joshi was questioning our fiscal system and also the liquidity. He has not gone deep into the liquidity system which is being followed by the present Government. To check liquidity, the Reserve Bank of India on 11 September, 2004 hiked the Cash Reserve Ratio. Cash Reserve Ratio is the most important component. If you insist upon the banks to maintain the CRR and have more percentage than what they are having, ultimately the flow of cash into the market will be reduced and there will be more control and definitely inflation also would come down. In a bid to control the price of edible oil and make its availability easy, the Government had on 16 September, 2004 reduced the tariff values on many edible oils by 50 dollars per metric tonne. Again in the Mid-Term Review of the Annual Policy Statement for 2004-05, announced on 26 October, 2004 the RBI had hiked the rate, that is, the interest rate paid on bank funds placed with the Reserve Bank of India against the Government paper, by 25 basis points to 4.75 per cent. Like that, the Goverment is doing its best to control the rate of inflation. Sir, the rate of inflation is not only the concern of the Government and the people of India, it is a matter of concern all over the world. Of course, people are saying that because countries like China and other countries are importing a lot of steel and other things from our country and they are paying high prices, the price of steel is going up. It is a very difficult situation. If the steel industry is not encouraged, the whole system will collapse. In the last ten years, the steel industry was in a very bad shape. Now, in the last two years, again the industry is growing because the international prices are going up, and countries like China are coming forward to take steel from our country. Therefore, this Government could have done nothing much about it.

Another important thing is, the Government must have measures in the long run to control inflation. Now, I would say, in conclusion, what the main factors are. One thing is erratic monsoon; there is drought. Another thing is oil price increase. We are saying that 70 per cent of crude oil is imported to India from various countries, and we are able to produce only 30 per cent of our requirements. Now, what have we done about it? Though it is not possible to do in one or two months, the Government must find out how to do maximum exploration of our own resources. You must have a targeted plan; say, within one year, how much additional exploration we can have in our country. There is so much of oil reserve; but I must tell frankly, with red tapism and system of having so many procedures, we are not really up to the mark. We must involve the countries from all over the world who are experts in exploration, give them a time-table and see to it that they participate to the maximum and help us in exploration so that 70 per cent of our imports could go down to atleast 50 per cent. Sir, how much should we produce so as to have 20 per cent cut in imports? And, what else do we want in our job of exploration? There should be a coordination between the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Petroleum. Both the Ministries must take it as a challenge. Everybdoy accepts that it has been a burning problem for the common man, for industries, for the economy as a whole. The moment international oil prices go up, everything gets affected. We have been hearing this for years; yes, exploration is important and we must see to it that our own production of crude oil is increased. I would like to know how much we have achieved in this. Not much at all. Therefore, in this connection, I would request the hon. Finance Minister to take it as a challenge, "Yes; nothing is impossible for us. We must achieve it. We must bring down the import of crude oil." Of course, it is not possible to do it in one day. Make an effort. Take a year more. Our Government has been in office for six months now, and in another four-and-a-half years, let us prove to the nations in the world what our capacity in oil exploration is. Once exploration goes up every three months, the import bill will come down and the inflation level will also come down.

The second point is that we have drought as well as monsoon. Here also the Government has to bear in mind that we cannot depend on monsoon. We might pray God; we might do *Maha yagya.* Still the law of nature has it own system of functioning. At one place, there is flood; at another place, there is drought; at another place, there will be heavy cyclone,

and moderte rainfall at some other place. So, how do we channelise this erratic monsoon to our advantage? Firstly, water should not be wasted. Even though there is a plan to divert the River Ganga from North to South,...*(Interruptions)* Godavari to Krishna, it may take time; but it is going to happen within three years. At other places across the country, it may take time. But let us have it in a phased manner. Let us be optimistic; let us be practical, cautious, conscious, judicious and meticulous. Nothing is impossible if we do thing cautiously, consciously and judiciously. I am confident that our Government, under the leadership of Dr. Manmohan Singhji, Chidambaramji and the UPA Chairman, Shrimati Soniaji, we are going to have a spectacular progress where nobody will be able to beat us in it. A day will come very soon when the BJP will be spellbound and wonder at the unparalleled results of this Government. They would remark loudly, "How were you able to get such phenomenal progress? What is the magic wand you have? "Now, all that I would say is, let us not politicise it. We are all one. When any issue comes, we must be united. You should not criticise a Government for the heck of it. If international oil prices go up by 50 dollars per months, and the Government is able to manage with 40 dollars, you still cannot say, "No; no, the price must be reduced." How is it possible? Even the Left Members, they are ideal people; *adarsh log hai.* I salute them; they are selfless people. They are supporting this Government on principle from outside. Otherwise, they could have joined us and enjoyed the fruits of the Government. Their philosophy is that nobody should point finger at them. And we have to accept it. I only feel sorry for one thing that though they are too *adarsh,* people are taking undue advantage of their adarsh qualities. Sir, while speaking on this Short Duration Discussion, Dr. Murli Manohar Joshi said that though the Left Parties are supporting the Government, but on this particular issue, they are also finding fault with the Government. Yes, they have to caution the Government that the prices of petroleum products are going up. They must caution the Government. They are not finding fault with the Government. They are inspiring the Government to do its best. Shri Chidambaramji has also done his best. Whatever best he could do, he has done it. Besides that, we are going to pray to God, the BJP and all the other parties should pray to God that this country should prosper. Let us not politicise every issue. If the Government is doing some good things, then, we must have a large heart to appreciate them. They should also advise the Government on this. You should not simply say that the financial situation of the country

under this Government is very bad. This Government has just completed six months in office. Can the Government do magic in six months? If the inflation goes up in the first six months of this Government, then, who is responsible for it? If you ask the people, then, they will hold the NDA Government for this increase in inflation. The earlier Government committed certain mistakes, and those mistakes are coming to our head now. You wait for one year. If the Government is not able to tackle this situation, then, you must criticise it. It is not fair on the part of the NDA or the BJP to criticise the Government on this front.

Sir, even though our Leftist friends who are supporting the Government from outside are making noise about the rise in prices of petroleum products, I would say that they are just cautioning the Government. They are not fighting with us. They have got the right to caution the Government. My dear friends, we are supporting you and you do it. When they caution us, we also hear them.

Sir, my friend, Mr. Jairam Ramesh wanted to speak on this— every time he goes on speaking — but this time, I have taken the opportunity to speak on this important issue. So, while concluding my speech, I admire Mr. Chidambaram who is actually making all out efforts to control the inflation.

Sir, a few days back, while speaking in this House, Mr. Yashwant Sinha had complimented the Government and said, "Yes, prices of petroleum products have gone up in the international market, and nobody can question the Government. There is nothing wrong in it. "He went on praising for fifteen minutes. When, lastly, somebody asked him whether he opposed it or not, he said, "Yes, I opposed it." It is not correct. This is not the system. We should not politicise every issue. We are in a democratic country. Let us have the courage and conscience, if the other party does a good thing, we should also do it. And for namesake, we should not criticise it. We must develop a new system. So, I am praying to God that Chidambaramji should be able to control inflation, that our GDP growth should go sky high and that the prosperity and growth of the nation should become boundless.

SHRI V. NARAYANASAMY: Sir, Mr. Subbarami Reddy is the only person in this country who has been affected by the price rise.

SHRI PRASANTA CHATTERJEE (West Bengal): Mr. Chairman, Sir,

actually, we feel very concerned about the present day situation of the price rise in the country. Due to the price rise, the real wage of the common man is coming down, and we feel very concerned about that. How are the people reacting to it? If this house is the reflection of the people's wishes, only about six months back, in spite of so many tall talks, in spite of spending crores and crores of rupees on advertisements on 'Shining India', how did the people react to it? We must feel that; we must realise that. We all know that even the international data shows that our country is the largest home of hungry people. According to the UNDP statistics and calculations, India's rank, — whether it is ruled by the BJP for six years or ruled by this Government for the last six months — is coming down. So, 'Shining India' was there. How did the people react to it? We all know that despite the certificate given by the BJP, during the NDA rule in 2001, they had also increased the prices of pertroleum products. For the BPL category, the price of wheat was increased by 66 per cent in 2001; for the BPL category, the price of rice was increased by 62 per cent. Shining India How, for the last three years, the BJP rule has increased the price of wheat for the APL category? It was by 85 per cent. For the APL, for rice, the rise was 61 per cent. So, both, APL and BPL categories were hard hit as far as the price rise in rice and wheat is concerned. While the NDA has ruined the country, the UPA Government has increased the price of petrol. We discussed it only in this Session, a few days back.

Now, Sir, the Left has been criticised, some times, as an agent of China, and, some times, as an agent of Pakistan. Somebody praises us. But we have our own agenda. We know that. Sir, I have no hesitation in saying that the wealth that has been accumulated in the hands of a few. Huge wealth. But there is a price rise for all sections of the people! The poor is the hard hit.

[MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN in the Chair]

Sir, somebody talks about good rains, bad rains. But we know that even in the days of bad rains how the food stocks were piled up in our godowns. But, whether it is bad rains or good rains, people went without food. The Nobel Prize winner, Amartya Sen, very recently said that the availability of food to the common man doesn't depend only on the rains, but it depends on the policy of the Government, how the Government reacts to it.

We have seen suicide deaths, we have seen starvation deaths. Somebody said, it is happening only in Maharashtra. Some will say, it is not happening in Rajasthan. We have seen farmers' committing suicides because of indebtedness, because of poverty, because of drastic fall in the procurement price. This we have seen. We have seen that in spite of the food stocks pilling up in the godowns, how the food export was taking place for the animals in USA, at cheaper prices. What is the Government's policy? That is the main question.

In the international market, the NDA Government disposed of 17 million tonnes of foodgrains, at lower price than the rates fixed for the BPL category. That is the picture. So, shining for the foreign animals and dieing for the Indian farmers! The UPA Government should, also, remember this.

A Common Minimum Programme has been published. Our party, the Left, has supported it. We sincerely hope that this Government should last long to check the* trend of the BJP and the RSS. ...*(Interruptions)*...

श्री सूदनारायण पणि (उड़ीसा): सर, यह क्या कह रहे हैं ..(व्यवधान).. इस तरह से *कह रहे हैं .. (व्यवधान).. हम लोग शांति से बैठे हैं।..(व्यवधान).. बीजेपी को, आरएसएस को ...(व्यवधान)...

SHRI PRASANTA CHATTERJEE: But you must react on the Common Minimum Programme. ...*(Interruptions)*...

SHRI ARUN JAITLEY (Gujarat): Sir, I take objection to the word.* ...*(Interruptions)*...

श्री जयन्ती लाल बरोट (गुजरात):* क्या यह बात सही है ..(व्यवधान)..

एक माननीय सदस्य: यह आपका ओपिनियन है।..(व्यवधान)..

SHRI PRASANTA CHATTERJEE: The impact of present day's steep price hike can't be judged in isolation without realising the effect of globalisation. So, Sir, you see how globalisation is destroying farmers' lives and livelihood, how it leads to the misery of the people and the growing imbalances between the rich and the poor. Sir, statistics show that in our country half of the average income is spent on food. So, if better food can be made availabel at a cheaper price for the poor, then a better spending on other things can be ensured more efficiently. But the situation in our

*Expunged, as ordered by the Chair.

country is otherwise. The bulk of the consumers, particularly the poor and small farmers, are living under difficult conditions owing to continous price hike of essential commodities. Their, life is in a very difficult condtion. Sir, I have remarked that price rise cannot be judged in isolation. You see how India removed the quantitiative restrictions completely on imports of all the 1429 items as per the bilateral agreements with the US. Out of the 715 items lifted from 1 April 2001, 137 items are agricultural and dairy products. The flooding of Indian market, Sir, by 1429 products has created devastating effect on the Indian farmers and Indian economy. This is the real picture. So, no aspect of Indian economy remains untouched. It has created high levels of cruelty against poor farmers. That is the picture of our country. Quantitative restrictions have been removed at a time when agricultural crisis created a situation which leads to farmers' debt, removal of subsidy and, of course, to starvation deaths of thousands of farmers in different parts of the country. The result is: we come across incidents like forced sale of kidneys and other body parts in order to survive. That has taken place in our country. Nobody can deny that. Sir, I have touched the drastic fall in procurement prices. According to Shrimati Vandana Siva — renowned social scientist — she has said in her book, *The mirage of market excise,* and I quote, 'Indian peasants are losing more than Rs. 1,16,200 crores per year due to falling of farm prices on *staple* crops and cash crops. Resources of poor sections of population are worst affected by fluctuation in prices'. She has remaked like this in her recent books. Sir, some times they say, 'we do not understand the Left'. How will they understand Left? Sometimes somebody from this side does not understand Left. But that is a different issue. But we have long-pending demands that Public Distribution System be strengthened for the poor, for the tribals. I repeat, for the tribals. Give BPL cards to all the poor, give essential commodities at a cheaper price, including essential drugs, life-saving drugs. All the essential commodities should be supplied at a cheaper price for the poor. This is our long standing demand. We have demanded today. We have demanded from them. Still we demand. I am very glad that UPA have observed in the manifesto that UPA will strengthen the PDS system under the Common Minimum Programme. The poorer sections are ill equipped to face the inflation. That is why we demand that the essential commodities be supplied through the Public Distribution System. I wish to place before the House how the effects of globalisation found in our country and how the availability of foodgrains per head per year has come down. In the year 1900, according

to statistics, the availability of foodgrains was 200 kg. per head per year. At the end of 1980, it raised to 180 kg. per head per year. In 1950, it came down to 150 kg , per head per year. But, again, according to statistics, it is coming down compare to the period of the Second World War. If you take the situation of Asia as a whole, the credit goes to China. Otherwise, the figure of Asia would have been something different. Sir, India has become a place where most poor people in the world live. Even after six months of UPA Government in office, incidents of suicides by farmers are taking place. Nobody can deny that. The hon. Prime Minister visited the States. The annual inflation has gone up. According to statistics, it was 7.34 per cent for the week ending November 13, 2004, as compared to 5.42 of the corresponding week of the last year. So, drastic action needs to be taken on a war footing. The previous Government has reduced subsidies provided to all agricultural inputs, including seeds, water, fertilizer, etc.

Sir, look at the situation in Rajsthan. The police have opened fire. And, on demand from the people, they are forced to release the leaders.The administration is forced to release them because of agitation by Rajasthan farmers. so, we have seen the situation here.

The problem is, the 'right' don't understand the Left. But, we will continue to support the UPA Government on the basis of the Common Minimum Programme...(*Interruptions*)...'right' means, my extreme 'right'.

SHRI RAVI SHANKAR PRASAD (Bihar): Sir, I thought it was a debate on the price rise....(*Interruptions*)...I don't understand this 'right-Left'.

SHRI PRASANTA CHATTERJEE: We do not ask the UPA to follow the Election manifesto of the Left. We only ask them to follow the common Minimum Programme of the UPA. The subjects of our Manifesto are unearthing black money, land reforms, etc. The land reforms, in real sense, are different. Without implementing the land reforms, in its real sense, our country cannot progress. We advocate that policy. We also demand for the recovery of huge loan taken by the corporate sector from our nationalised banks. We also want to improve the agro-based industry. I repeat it again here. They had protested that we have supported the UPA Government. I would say that we will continue to do that so that the State do not fall in the hands of the * forces. They were playing religion with politics.

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*Expunged, as ordered by the Chair.

3.00 P.M.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Mr. Chatterjee, please conclude. You have exhausted your time.

SHRI PRASANTA CHATTERJEE: Sir, we have discussed the impact of increased price of petroleum products during the last week. The UF Government dismantled the Administered Price Mechanism in 1997. You know that. But, our party had supported that Government only from outside. We opposed that. It was implemented in 2001-02. The Import Parity Pricing Policy adversely affects the common people. It has further eroded the real income.

With these words, Mr. Deputy Chairman, Sir, I conclude my speech. Thank you.

†श्री अबू आसिम आज़मी (उत्तर प्रदेश): डिप्टी चेयरमैन साहब, मैं आपका बहुत शुक्रिया अदा करता हूं कि आपने मुझे प्राइस राइज़ पर बोलने का मौका दिया। हमारे देश की आबादी 106,54,62,000 है, जो दुनिया में आबादी के लिहाज़ से दूसरा सबसे बड़ा देश है। आज ग्लोबलाइज़ेशन और कंज्यूमरिज्म के ज़माने में, दुनिया के सबसे बड़े मार्केट के तौर पर, मल्टी नेशनल कंपनियों की निगाहों में हमारा देश, सरमायेदारों के लिए रुपए का दरख्त न बन जाए, इसलिए विदेशी कंपनियों से ज्यादा हमें इस देश में आम आदमी की फिक्र करना बहुत जरूरी है। जब हुकूमत, आम आदमी की फिक्र करती है, तो उसके लिए सबसे बड़ा चैलेंज inflation है, जिसकी वजह से महंगाई बढ़ती है और जरूरी अशिया की कीमतों में इज़ाफा होता है हम पर्लियामेंट में बहुत खुश होते हैं कि हमारे फॉरेन एक्सचेंज रिर्ज़व में इज़ाफा हो गया, मिलियन डॉलर्स हमारे खजाने में जमा हो गए, लेकिन यह नकली खुशी है, क्योंकि इससे हजारों किसानों, मजदूरों और उनके खानदानों को खुदकुशी से नहीं बचाया जा सकता है।

उपसभापति महोदय, आम हिन्दुस्तानी के लिए महंगाई का क्या असर है, यह इस बात से समझा जा सकता है कि इस देश में किसान लगातार खुदकुशी कर रहा हैं अभी मैं पिछले दिनों का, महाराष्ट्र का एक किस्सा बताऊं, हम एक किसान के घर गए, तो मालूम हुआ कि उस किसान ने आत्महत्या कर ली। उसकी बेटी की शादी थी, उसने बैंक से सिर्फ 2,000 रुपए का कर्ज़ा लिया था, वह 2,000 रुपए बैंक को नहीं दे सका। उसकी बेटी की शादी के लिए घर में अनाज रखा हुआ था, गल्ला रखा हुआ था, बैंक के लोग आए और अनाज लेकर चले गए। उस गरीब की हालत यह हुई कि उसने बेटी की बारात आने से पहले, खुदकुशी कर ली। इसलिए आज सबसे जरूरी है कि

किसी तरह से गुरबत पर और महंगाई पर काबू पाया जाए। पिछले एक दशक में दुनिया में, भूखे इंसानों की तादाद में बहुत इज़ाफा हुआ है। Malnutrition और भूख, दो ऐसी बलाएं हैं, जिन्होंने हिन्दुस्तान को बिल्कुल दबा रखा है। वर्ष 1995 से 1997 तक भारत वर्ष में भूखे इंसानों की तादाद, यानी ऐसे लोग जो दो वक्त पेट भर खाना नहीं खा सकते, ऐसे लोगों की तादाद 203 मिलियन थी। वर्ष 2000 से 2002 तक के जो आंकड़े मेरे पास हैं, इनके मुताबिक ऐसे लोगों की तादाद बढ़कर 221.1 मिलियन हो गई है। जब देश में 5 वर्षों के अन्दर ऐसे इफराद करोड़ों में पहुंच जाए जो दो वक्त भरपेट रोटी भी नहीं खा सकते, जो हम कैसे समझ लें कि हमारा मुल्क तरक्की कर रहा है? आज देश में 20 करोड़ 21 लाख इफराद ऐसे हैं, जिनको दो वक्त की रोटी नहीं मिल रही है, जो दो वक्त की रोटी के लिए मारे-मारे फिर रहे हैं। पिछले 5 वर्षों में, भूखे अवाम की तादाद में एक करोड़, अस्सी लाख का इज़ाफा हुआ है। इसका सबसे बड़ा सबब मुल्क में बढ़ती हुई मंहगाई है। Food & Agriculture Organisation की रिपोर्ट – "State of food insecurity in the World - 2004" हमारी आंखें खोलने के लिए काफी है। इस रिपोर्ट के मुताबिक दुनिया में हर पांच सेकेंड में एक बच्चा भूख से मर जाता है, हर साल 20 मिलियन ऐसे बच्चे पैदा होते हैं, जिनकी मांओं को भरपेट खाना न मिलने की वजह से, उनके बच्चों का वजन कम होता है ओर वे underweight होते हैं। हमारे देश में पैदा होने वाले 30 परसेंट बच्चे, underweight होते हैं। ये सारी बलाएं महंगाई की वजह से और आमदनी कम होने की वजह से बढ़ती जा रही हैं। उपसभापति जी, दूसरी तरफ मैं ध्यान दिलाना चाहता हूं कि गोदामों में भारी मिकदार में अनाज भरा पड़ा है। लाखों-लाखों टन अनाज सड़ गया, उसका डिस्ट्रीब्यूशन नहीं हुआ। महाराष्ट्र में हजारों बच्चे भूख से और कम खाना मिलने से मर गए। हम देख रहे हैं कि रेल के डिब्बों से लगे हुए लोग खड़े रहते हैं कि रेल के डिब्बों से कुछ बचा हुआ खाना फेंक दें, जिससे वे अपना पेट भर लें। ऐसे लोगों की तादाद बहुत है। दूसरी तरफ इस मुल्क से बहुत बड़ी तादाद में लोग गल्फ कन्ट्रीज़ में नौकरी करने जाना चाहते हैं। इस मुल्क में पापुलेशन का प्रॉब्लम है, मंहगाई है गरीबी है, नौकरी नहीं मिल रही है, लेकिन जो लोग बाहर जा रहे हैं, उनको छूट देने की बजाए उन पर रोक लगाई जा रही है। मैं मंत्री जी से कहना चाहता हूं कि अगर ज्यादा-से-ज्यादा इम्प्लायमेंट, जो बाहर मिल रहा है, उस पर रोक न लगाई जाए, बल्कि उनको जाने के लिए छूट दे दी जाए तो हमारी चौतरफा तरक्की हो सकती है। इस पर ध्यान देना बहुत जरूरी है। यूपीए सरकार के आते ही इन्होंने बड़े-बड़े वायदे किए। पेट्रोल के दाम, डीजल के दाम , मिट्टी के तेल के दाम, गैस सिलिंडर के दाम में बहुत इज़ाफा हुआ। इन्फ्लेशन बढ़ा है, मंहगाई में इज़ाफा हुआ है। देश की तरक्की का पहिया उल्टा घूम रहा है। रोटी-दाल मंहगी हो रही हैं,कारें सस्ती हो रही हैं। हमारी हुकुमतों की सबसे पहली तरज़ीह रोटी, कपड़ा और मकान नहीं है। जब तक इस पर ध्यान दिया जाएगा, आम आदमी की परेशानी दूर नहीं होने वाली है। आज किसान परेशान है, बुनकर परेशान है, लेकिन उस पर कोई ध्यान नहीं दिया जा रहा है। कंप्यूटर के दाम घट रहे हैं, नॉन-फूड आर्टिकल ग्रुप के इंडेक्स में 1.3 परसेंट की

कमी आयी है, जबकि ज्वार, मसाला, दाल, मैदा , बाजरा, मूंग, समुंदरी ग़िजा की कीमतों में इज़ाफा हुआ है। तरक्की का सही मतलब तो उस वक्त होगा जबकि मंहगाई पर रोक लगे, आम आदमी के लिए बाजार में राहत हो। गांधी जी ने कहा था कि जब भी आप कोई बजट या योजना बनाइए, तो समाज का जो सबसे कमजोर और आखिरी शख़्स है, उसकी तरफ एक बार ज़रूर देख लीजिए। आपकी योजना अपने आप कामयाब हो जाएगी। मैं यूपीए सरकार से मांग करता हूं कि सरकार गांधी जी के उन उसूलों पर ध्यान देते हुए लगातार आगे बढ़ें और इस मंहगाई पर रोक लगाए। सरकार चाहे एनडीए की हो, चाहे यूपीए की हो, लेकिन ग़रीबी बढ़ती जा रही है, लोगों को नौकरियां नहीं मिल रही हैं, मंहगाई बढ़ती जा रही है। मैं इन्हीं अलफ़ाज़ के साथ यह मांग करता हूं कि आम आदमी को, जो ग़रीबी की रेखा से नीचे 30 से 40 परसेंट लोग हैं, जो इस देश में भूख से तड़प रहे हैं, उनका कुछ-न-कुछ जल्द-से-जल्द इंतजाम करने की राह निकालनी चाहिए। धन्यवाद।

شری ابو عاصم اعظمی ''اتر پردیش'': ڈپٹی چیئرمین صاحب، میں آپ کا بہت شکریہ ادا کرتا ہوں کہ آپ نے مجھے پرائز رائز پر بولنے کا موقع دیا۔ ہمارے دیش کی آبادی 106,54,62,000 ہے جو دنیا کی آبادی کے لحاظ سے دوسرا سب سے بڑا دیش ہے۔ آج گلوبلائزیشن اور کنزیومرزم کے زمانے میں، دنیا کے سب سے بڑے مارکیٹ کے طور پر، ملٹی نیشنل کمپنیوں کی نگاہوں میں ہمارا دیش، سرمائے داروں کے لئے روپوں کا درخت نہ بن جائے، اس لئے ودیشی کمپنیوں سے زیادہ ہمیں اس دیش میں عام آدمی کی فکر کرنا بہت ضروری ہے۔ جب حکومت، عام آدمی کی فکر کرتی ہے، تو اس کے لئے سب سے بڑا چیلنج انفلیشن ہے، جس کی وجہ سے مہنگائی بڑھتی ہے اور ضروری اشیاء کی قیمتوں میں اضافہ ہوتا ہے۔ ہم پارلیمنٹ میں بہت خوش ہوتے ہیں کہ ہمارے فارن ایکسچینج ریزرو میں اضافہ ہوگیا، ملین ڈالرس ہمارے خزانے میں جمع ہوگئے، لیکن یہ نقلی خوشی ہے، کیوں کہ اس سے ہزاروں کسانوں، مزدوروں اور ان کے خاندانوں کو خودکشی سے نہیں بچایا جاسکتا ہے۔

اُپ سبھاپتی مہودے، عام ہندوستانی کے لئے مہنگائی کا کیا اثر ہے، یہ اس بات سے سمجھا جاسکتا ہے کہ اس دیش میں کسان لگاتار خودکشی کر رہا ہے۔ ابھی میں پچھلے دنوں کا مہاراشٹر کا ایک قصہ بتاؤں ہم ایک

†Transliteration in Urdu Script.

کسان کے گھر گئے تو معلوم ہوا کہ اس کسان نے خودکشی کر لی۔ اس کی بیٹی کی شادی تھی اس نے بینک سے صرف دو ہزار روپے کا قرض لیا تھا۔ وہ دو ہزار روپے بینک کو نہیں دے سکا اس کی بیٹی کی شادی کے لئے گھر میں اناج رکھا ہوا تھا، بینک کے لوگ آئے اور اناج لے کر چلے گئے۔ اس غریب کی حالت یہ ہوئی کہ اس نے بیٹی کی بارات آنے سے پہلے خودکشی کر لی۔ اس لئے آج سب سے ضروری ہے کہ کسی طرح سے غربت پر اور مہنگائی پر قابو پایا جائے۔ پچھلے ایک دہے میں دنیا میں، بھوکے انسانوں کی تعداد میں بہت اضافہ ہوا ہے۔ Malnutrition اور بھوک، دو ایسی بلائیں ہیں جنہوں نے ہندوستان کو بالکل دبا رکھا ہے۔ سال 1995 سے 1997 تک پورے ہندوستان میں بھوکے انسانوں کی تعداد یعنی ایسے لوگ جو دو وقت پیٹ بھر کھانا نہیں کھا سکتے، ایسے لوگوں کی تعداد 203 ملین تھی۔ سال 2000 سے 2002 تک کے جو آنکڑے میرے پاس ہیں، ان کے مطابق ایسے لوگوں کی تعداد بڑھ کر 221.1 ملین ہوگئی ہے۔ جب دیش میں پانچ سالوں کے اندر ایسے افراد کروڑوں میں پہنچ جائیں جو دو وقت بھر پیٹ روٹی بھی نہیں کھا سکتے، تو ہم کیسے سمجھ لیں کہ ہمارا ملک ترقی کر رہا ہے؟ آج دیش میں 20 کروڑ 21 لاکھ افراد ایسے ہیں جن کو دو وقت کی روٹی نہیں مل رہی ہے، جو دو وقت کی روٹی کے لئے مارے مارے پھر رہے ہیں۔ پچھلے پانچ سالوں میں بھوکے عوام کی تعداد میں ایک کروڑ اسی لاکھ کا اضافہ ہوا ہے۔ اس کا سب سے بڑا سبب ملک میں بڑھتی ہوئی مہنگائی ہے۔ فوڈ اینڈ ایگری کلچر آرگنائزیشن کی رپورٹ "State of food insecurity in the World-2004" ہماری آنکھیں کھولنے کے لئے کافی ہے۔ اس رپورٹ کے مطابق دنیا میں ہر پانچ سیکنڈ میں ایک بچہ بھوک سے مر جاتا ہے، ہر سال 20 ملین ایسے بچے پیدا ہوتے ہیں جن کی ماؤں کو بھر پیٹ کھانا نہ ملنے کی وجہ سے ان کا وزن کم ہوتا ہے اور وہ underweight ہوتے ہیں۔ ہمارے دیش میں پیدا ہونے والے 30 فیصد بچے underweight ہوتے ہیں۔ یہ ساری بلائیں مہنگائی کی وجہ سے اور آمدنی کم ہونے کی وجہ سے بڑھتی جا رہی ہیں۔

آپ سبھاپتی جی، دوسری طرف میں دھیان دلانا چاہتا ہوں کہ گوداموں میں بھاری مقدار میں اناج بھرا پڑا ہے۔ لاکھوں لاکھ ٹن اناج سڑ گیا، اسکا ڈسٹری بیوشن نہیں ہوا۔ مہاراشٹر میں ہزاروں بچے بھوک

سے اور کم کھانا ملنے سے مر گئے۔ ہم دیکھ رہے ہیں کہ ریل کے ڈبوں سے لگے ہوئے لوگ کھڑے رہتے ہیں کہ ریل کے ڈبوں سے کچھ بچا ہوا کھانا پھینک دیں جس سے وہ اپنا پیٹ بھر لیں۔ ایسے لوگوں کی تعداد بہت ہے۔ دوسری طرف اس ملک سے بہت بڑی تعداد میں لوگ گلف کنٹریز میں نوکری کرنے جانا چاہتے ہیں۔ اس ملک میں پاپولیشن کا پرابلم ہے، مہنگائی ہے، غریبی ہے، نوکری نہیں مل رہی ہے، لیکن جو لوگ باہر جا رہے ہیں، ان کو چھوٹ دینے کی بجائے ان پر روک لگائی جا رہی ہے۔ میں منتری جی کہنا چاہتا ہوں کہ اگر زیادہ سے زیادہ ایمپلائمنٹ جو باہر مل رہا ہے اس پر روک نا لگائی جائے، بلکہ ان کو جانے کے لئے چھوٹ دے دی جائے تو ہماری چوطرفہ ترقی ہو سکتی ہے۔ اس پر دھیان دینا بہت ضروری ہے۔ یو پی اے سرکار کے آتے ہی انہوں نے بڑے بڑے وعدے کئے۔ پیٹرول کے دام، ڈیزل کے دام، مٹی کے تیل کے دام، گیس سلنڈر کے دام میں بہت اضافہ ہوا۔ انفلیشن بڑھا ہے، مہنگائی میں اضافہ ہوا ہے۔ ویش کی ترقی کا پہیہ الٹا گھوم رہا ہے۔ روٹی، دال مہنگی ہو رہی ہے، کاریں سستی ہو رہی ہیں۔ ہماری حکومتوں کی سب سے پہلی ترجیح روٹی، کپڑا اور مکان نہیں ہے۔ جب تک اس پر دھیان نہیں دیا جائے گا عام آدمی کی پریشانی دور نہیں ہونے والی ہے۔ آج کسان پریشان ہے، بلکہ پریشان ہے، لیکن اس پر کوئی دھیان نہیں دیا جا رہا ہے۔ کمپیوٹر کے دام گھٹ رہے ہیں، نان فوڈ آرٹیکل گروپ کے انڈیکس میں 1.3 فیصد کی کمی آئی ہے، جبکہ جوار، مسالہ، دال، معدہ، باجرہ، مونگ، سمندری غذا کی قیمتوں میں اضافہ ہوا ہے۔ ترقی کا صحیح مطلب تو اس وقت ہوگا جبکہ مہنگائی پر روک لگے، عام آدمی کے لئے بازار میں راحت ہو۔ گاندھی جی نے کہا تھا کہ جب بھی آپ کوئی بجٹ یا یوجنا بنائیے تو سماج کا جو سب سے کمزور اور آخری شخص ہے اس کی طرف ایک بار ضرور دیکھ لیجیے، آپ کی یوجنا اپنے آپ کامیاب ہو جائے گی، میں یو پی اے سرکار سے مانگ کرتا ہوں کہ سرکار گاندھی جی کے ان اصولوں پر دھیان دیتے ہوئے لگاتار آگے بڑھے اور اس مہنگائی پر روک لگائے۔ سرکار چاہے این ڈی اے کی ہو چاہے یو پی اے کی ہو، لیکن غریبی بڑھتی جا رہی ہے لوگوں کو نوکریاں نہیں مل رہی ہیں، مہنگائی بڑھتی جا رہی ہے۔

میں انہیں الفاظ کے ساتھ یہ مانگ کرتا ہوں کہ عام آدمی کو جو غریبی کی ریکھا سے نیچے 30 سے 40 فیصد لوگ ہیں، جو اس دیش میں بھوک سے تڑپ رہے ہیں ان کا کچھ نہ کچھ جلد سے جلد انتظام کرنے کی راہ نکالنی چاہئے۔

دھنیواد

"ختم شد"

*SHRI N.R. GOVINDRAJAR (Tamil Nadu): Mr. Deputy Chairman, Sir, first of all I thank you for giving me this opportunity. This august House has a great history. Many a stalwarts, great personalities have spoken in this house. As I stand here, in this hallowed precincts to make my maiden speech, I piously remember the benevolence of my political mentor, the respected General Secretary of AIADMK, the Hon'ble Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu who has sent me this to this House and I submit my gratitude at the golden feet of our revered Amma.

Sir, as this is my maiden speech, I request you to kindly give me a few more minutes. Sir, I wish to put forth my views on price rise on behalf of AIADMK. Price of commodities is increasing. Prices of even essential commodities used by common man have gone up. the prices of petrol, diesel, domestic LPG, Kerosene, food items, vegetables, Chemicals medicines, steel and iron ore have gave up and the list is unending. This is very obvious because inflation is high in the country. We find that the increase is higher than what it was during the 5-year rule of the previous Government. The inflation has been swinging between 7 and 8 per cent just as the patient battling for life in the ICU. Why this inflation? This is the result of price rise. And why this price rise? If we ask the Hon"ble Finance Minister, he would cite several reasons such as, the rate of crude oil going up in the international market. He would further say that the prices of petroleum products have gone up because of this and that this has resulted in the rise of transportation cost, and that the cascading effects are the price rise of commodities. That could be one of the reasons but certainly not the only reason. Then you could ask what is the reason Yes, the budget presented by the Finance Minister is the root cause of the price rise. It does not mean that I am trying to find fault with the Finance Minister or the Government. The late lamented leader Mao once said criticism without acclamation and acclamation without criticism is of no use. So, I feel it is my duty to make a critical appraisal of the situation. Sir, when the Hon'ble finance Minister presented the Budget, the Hon'ble Members of the treasure benches applauded it and said this budget would be a boon to the common man of the country. We were also led to believe that could be true. But what happened? There is inflation, there is all round price rise. I wish to refer to an anecdote drive home my point. In the villages you find a nomad, soothsayer with a resounding small drum in his hand foretelling for times. As he walks through the street, he would slow down near a house and say, fortune is nearing this family, good time will reach soon' and so on. When the unsuspecting lady of the house comes out, he would repeat his stock phrases of good fortune and misuse his ignorance, get same alms and quietly disappear, the question is whether fortune smiled

*English translation of the original speech delivered in Tamil.

upon the family, the lady? No, fortune smiled upon the soothsayer, the nomad who tucked away clothes and money. Same way the people of the country got nothing from the budget. It is possible the rulers or Ministers got, but certainly not the people.

Sir, the Finance Minister and Petroleum Minister say that as a result of price rise of crude oil in the international market, the prices of other things have gone up. Let us take it as a point for debate and see what had happened. In the budget that was presented, the subsidy on petroleum products was reduced from Rs. 6300 crore to Rs. 3500 crore. Was it not natural that this would result in price rise? Then I come to the second point. Another tax known as service tax was increased from 8 per cent to 10 per cent. Not only that you added 15 more services and brought a total of 73 services under this tax net. Even the tourist transport and goods transport fall under this list. Insurance has not been spared and as a result, the premium has gone up. The insurance premium for the truck rose from Rs. 13000 to Rs. 23000. This led to increase in transportation cost and the burden ultimately passed on to the commodities of every hue. There are 3.26 crore trucks plying in this country ferrying goods from place to place. The hike in petrol and diesel affects them all and the sufferer is the common man.

Mr. Deputy Chairman, Sir, 85 avocations have been deleted from the list of small-scale industries. Because of this, these small-scale industries are unable to get loans or subsidies from banks. when the industries are in doldrums, the prices ought to go up. On the one hand you boast of removing CENVAT, but on the other hand lakhs of workers of the 85 categories of small-scale industries have lost their livelihood. The excise duty on iron ore is increased from 8 per cent to 12 per cent. This has resulted in the increase of prices of small implements such as crow bar, spade and also infrastructure equipments have gave up You might then ask, whether we have not reduced the tax on anything? Yes, you did reduce tax. But on what? You reduced the tax on tractors, used by big landlords, but you have made the crow bar and spade used by the laboures and farmers dearer by levying more excise duty on raw material. You say you have reduced the price of Platinum. We know it is more expensive than gold and only very affluent people living in palatial houses use it. But you have hiked the tax, on imitation jewellery bought by poor people who cannot afford to by gold jewellery. Tax on candles and matches has also been increased. Strangely, you have increased the tax on chocolates and soft drinks bought by the children of rich people. On the other hand you have people who do not have gruel to drink, chappel to wear or a mat to sleep. For who have you reduced the tax?

Sir, last week, the Petroleum Minister was making a reference to Tamil Nadu saying as if enough was not done to reduce sales tax in the State. I wish to make one thing clear. There are lakhs of fishermen in Tamil Nadu who go for fishing using country boats and mechanised trawlers. When fishermen requested the Hon'ble chief Minister to Tamil Nadu saying that they are affected by the high price of diesel, with the heart of a mother, the Hon'ble Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu waived the entire sale tax on diesel for fishermen.

Sir if the Government wanted more revenue it could have resorted to taxation or hiked the interest rate in some other area. But you have, unfortunately, reduced the interest on employees' provident fund. Instead of in creasing the rate of interest, the Government has reduced it and that has affected the bank deposit adversely. Last week I happened to read a Tamil periodical namely Junior Vikadan. The Hon'ble Finance Minister is aware of it. That periodical carried a write-up in which it is mentioned that the inflation in UK and the US is 2 per cent. It is a 2.5% in the developing Malaysia and 1.5% in China. It also mentions that in 1995 the rate of inflation in China was 17.1% as against 10.1% in India. Today the inflation in China is only 1.5% If the Government was really serious to control price rise, then it should have increased the subsidy on petroleum products. It could have at least reduced the sales tax on petrol and diesel. But blaming the price rise on the hike in the international crude oil price is a lame excuse.

When such arguments are advanced, I am reminded of one thing. In the villages, you will find snake charmers attracting the people promising to show the snake-mongoose fight. people will gather and wait patiently to see that fight. But the snake-mongoose fight will never take place. He will sell his amulets to the unsuspecting people, make money and disappear. The promise to control price is just like that promise which will not come true, Coming to power is not merely to wield power but to do some good for the people. So, I hope the Government will take steps to bring down prices soon. As said by Mao, 'Freedom without restriction and restriction without freedon will not help' so the Government should exercise control and bring down price rise. With these words I conclude.

SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chairman, Sir, I came prepared with a certain structure for my intervention, but I must admit with all the greatest of respect that having listened to the learned and erudite Dr. Murli Manohar Joshi, who opened this debate, for 45-minutes, the entire structure of my intervention has been thrown off gear. I am still trying to understand what is it that he was trying to say apart from dating the left, and I took consolation in the fact that throughout 45-minutes in order to

understand what he said I kept looking at the face of the Leader of the Opposition and every time he spoke, the leader of the Opposition, the distinguished Leader of the Opposition, winced and grimaced and I took consolation in the fact that whatever he spoke was alien not only to me but also to his colleague, the leader of the Opposition. But, any way, to give the learned professor the benefit of doubt, I have tried to identify what are the four or five important substantive issues that he tried to raise. I am sure that the hon. finance Minister is going to deal with this when he replies. But let me just take three or four important issues that he raised, and befoe I get into my intervention, I want straightway to dispose them off. I do not want to take Dr. Murli Manohar Joshi on his opinion, but I want to take him on facts because, I think, we are all entitled to our opinions. But, I think, there is certain sanctity to facts which I want to place before you. the first point that was made was that the service tax that was imposed had an inherently inflationary impact. it is an accepted article of faith today amongst all serious, and I underline the word '*serious*', observers of the Indian economy that we need to move to a regime of service taxation. A regime, where you are taxing only industries; you are not taxing agriculture and thus leaving aside a segment of the economy which accounts for over 50 per cent of the GDP, surely is not conducive to raising additional revenues for all the worthwhile social objectives that all political parties adhere to. Therefore, to argue that the service tax is something that should not have been resorted to - one can have an argument on the manner in which the service tax was introduced whether that should have been on the threshold level or not - and to make the entire argument that the Budget was inflationary because of the service tax, in my view betrays a certain basic misunderstanding of the direction in which fiscal policy is going. Indeed, the previous Government itself was participant to this process.Secondly, Dr. murli Manohar Joshi bemoaned that the budgetary allocations for two of his favourite programmes, not only his favourite but, indeed, favourite of all our programmes,— the *Sarva Siksha Abhiyan* and the Mid-day Meal Scheme — are very minuscule, to say the least. Sir, the facts of the case are: In 2004-05 as compared to 2003-04, the *Sarva Siksha Abhiyan* has seen a 97 per cent increase in the Budget outlay, and the Mid-day Meal Scheme has seen a 100 per cent increase in out lay. This quantum of outlay has never happened before and this is being made possible because of the 2 per cent education cess that was levied, which was the part of the Congress manifesto and is a part of the Common Minimum Programme. To argue that the *Sarva Siksha Abhiyan* and the Mid-day Meal Scheme, the flagship programme of the NDA and the flagship programme of the UPA as well,— one can argue whether they are being properly implemented

or not, that is a separate issue -- are under-funded again goes contrary to the facts. Sir, the third point he made, and that is a very serious point. I thought, that he made, was that every time the Congress is in power, inflationary pressures built up; that Congress is equal to inflation. Sir, in 1979-80, there was a non-Congress Government in power, of which his political party was very much an integral part. There was a regime change and the regime change took place on the issue of inflation. The Congress came into power making inflation the issue. Inflation was the legacy of the first Janata Government between 1977-79. So, when the Congress Government came into power — well, the former Prime Minister and the former Home Minister were distinguished members of that Janata Government. Sir, the second regime change that took place was in 1991, and again, at that time of the regime change, the characteristic of that regime change was a transition from a very high rate of inflation, the double digit inflation, touching almost 16 to 17 per cent on a monthly basis and this is when the congress came into power. So, contrary to what he tried to protray that whenever the Congress came into power. Inflation rates went up, the facts of the case are, and, there is a very distinguished election observe, a psephologist sitting next to him and he, probably, will also bear this out that every time that there has been a regime change....

SHRI ARUN JAITLEY: Today, you started off not as an economist but as a psychiatrist... (*interruptions*)

SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH: I will come to you. So, contrary to what was made out to be, actually, the fact of the case is that the Congress has come into power every time there has been an inflationary spiral and it has taken the congress two to three years in order to cool the fires of inflationary expectations. Sir, the fourth point that he made, which I really frankly did not understand, was that he kept talking about M3 for industry and so on. I am sure the Finance Minister - may be there is some Economics term that has been invented — perhaps, will enlighten us on it. But, Dr. Murli Manohar Joshi talked a lot on exchange rate management; that why don't we use the exchange rate in order to control inflation and, I think, again that is a very serious point that he made. We have a former distinguished Governor of the Reserve bank amidst us and I am sure he will also be speaking on this issue and I will take this point up in the course of my structured intervention. Sir, I thought I must begin with all due respect to the learned Professor for whom I have a great deal of regard for his knowledge in Physics, I thought I must begin by pointing out that his 45 minutes of intervention left me completely befuddled and confused on the issue to price rise.

Sir, the three issues, that I wanted to raise as part of this debate, are following: first is the measurement. It is a very important issue that how do

we measure inflation, how do we measure price rise. Number two, I want to talk about the history of inflation in this country in the recent years. And, number three, I want to talk about the current inflationary trend, the current inflationary cycle, which is the immediate provocation for the debate. now, indoing so, I don't want to get into this six-month versus six-year episode, that we were there for six years and we did this and you are there for six months and what have you done? I don't want to get into this six-month versus six-year *tu-tu-main-main* which goes on all the time. Sir, I hope *tu-tu-main-main* is Parliamentary. I would rather stick to these three issues which go beyond partisan politics. First, Sir, the measurement of inflation, how do we measure inflation? Sir, there is a common confusion in the public debate in our country between inflation and prices and, therefore, people argue that inflation rate is falling but prices are going up. Sir, the rate of inflation, with which we are all concerned, measures the rate of increase of prices. So, you could have a situation where the inflation rate is actually falling and prices could either be increasing or prices themselves could be falling. So, when we are talking about, and when we use terms like the Wholesale Price Index or the Consumer Price index, these are measures of the rate of inflation. Now, Sir, there are four measures that we have for inflation, four well-known measures. The most popular measure is the Wholesale Price Index which comes out every Friday with a two-week lag and there are there other indices, the CPI indices, not the CPI but the Consumer Price Indices — the Consumer Price Index for agricultural labour, the Consumer price Index for urban non-manual employees, and the Consumer Price Index for industrial workers. Now, Sir, the problem is that none of these indices gives an accurate picture of the situation, as far as inflation is concerned. We use the Wholesale Price Index: we don't use the consumer Price Index. We use the Wholesale Price Index because it is easily available, it is collectible on almost an online manner and it is available only with two-week time lag. Sir, Three years ago, the then Government appointed a very distinguished... (*interruptions*)...

SHRI LALITBHAI MEHTA (Gujarat): Will you please yield for a minute?

SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH: Yes, please.

SHRI LALITBHAI MEHTA: You know very well that while deciding the Consumer Price Index, the foodgrains are given more weightage, and, while deciding the Wholesale Price index, the food items are given less weightage, and, therefore, the actual reflection of the increase in prices is not there as far as the common man is concerned.

SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH: Sir, I am glad that you raised this point. I am coming to this...*(Interruptions)*..

SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM: Sir, so far as the burden of the common man is concerned, the CPI reflects it more rather than the WPI. So, when you talked about WPI, you should have pointed out what it means to the common man, whose basket has food as a larger component, and, what is the rise in the CPI. Nobody mentioned CPI today.

SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH: I was coming to this right now. The CPI is running lower than the WPI, which may appear contrary to the facts, but the reality is that the CPI is running lower than the WPI.

Now, Sir, the point that I want to make on the price indices is that three years ago, the NDA Government set up a very distinguished National Statistical Commission headed by the present Chairman of the Twelfth Finance Commission, and, former Governor of the Reserve Bank of India, Dr. C. Rangarajan, and, I want to quote from page 333, and, bring this to the notice of the Finance Minister and my colleagues in this House. And, this is what the National Statistical Commission said three years ago: "All consumer price indices presently compiled are based on outdated base years with a long period having elapsed since considerable changes in the economy have taken place affecting the general patterns and levels of consumption. Moreover, several new commodities and specifications have come into vogue while some of the earlier items and specifications have disappeared altogether from the market. Thus for policy purposes, the present Consumer Price Indices have very litttle value." This is the conclusion of the National Statistical Commission.

Now, I come to the Wholesale Price Index. Sir, as far as the Wholesale Price Index is concerned, it is ;marginally better than the Consumer Price Index, but the conclusion of the National Statistical Commission on the Wholesale Price Index is no less damaging than that on the Consumer Price Index. It says on page 336, and, I quote "As the present Wholesale Price Index is an inadequate measure of inflation, there is a need for a separate index for measurement of inflation in the economy."

Sir, the short point that I want to make on the measurement of inflation is that neither the Consumer Price Index nor the Wholesale Price Index reflects the actual ground realities. Now, we could argue that the Wholesale Price Index is very relevant because it is available with the 2-week time lag, and, it covers a broad spectrum of commodities. But the fact of the matter is that any Government concerned with the price situation,; the inflation situation,; must address this issue which the National Statistical

Commission had raised that basically the Consumer Price Indices and the Wholesale Price Index are of limited utility and limited value. It does not reflect realities of price increases, or, price decreases, as the case may be.

Sir, therefore, my first request to the Finance Minister is to enlighten us as to what is the Government doing on the implementation of the National Statistical Commission, which had asked for a completely new price index to be based. The Wholesale Price Index does not, for example, include services, which is 50 per cent of the economy. This is one of the criticisms that has been made of the Wholesale Price Index.

Therefore, I would request the Finance Minister to deal with the issue in his reply as to what are the changes that are on the anvil as far as the measurement is concerned, because, Sir, in all public debates, a lot of blood is spilt in the Parliament and the Press on these indices, and, if these indices are not accurate reflections of what is going on, I am afraid then we are just shooting ourselves in the dark.

The second point is the history of inflation. Now, Sir, it is true that in recent decades we have had short bouts of very high inflation, particularly, in the mid 1970s. But if you look at the long history of inflation in this country, in the last 30-40 years, India has not been a high inflation country, and, that is a tribute to our open democracy, a tribute to our Parliamentary democracy where double digit inflation is not politically sustainable for long. If you look at all the data, Sir, the fact remains that India has grown in the last 30-40 years with an average rate of inflation averaging anywhere between 6 to 7per cent per year. Sir, I would like, in this connection, to quote from a book that has just been published, these are the lectures of the current Governor of the Reserve Bank of India, this is Dr. Venugopal Reddy's book on 'Monetary and Financial Sector Reforms in India', and he says here, "Thus, India recorded satisfactory levels of inflation for the entire period, 1950-2000, with the average rate of inflation working out to 6.7 per cent". So, in the long period, Sir, actually, ;the political economy of India could sustain a low growth, but can't sustain a high rate of inflation. That is the political economy of our country, immediately politics intervenes and ensures that no Government can continue sustaining itself with double-digit inflation. Sir, is there an optimal rate of inflation? Now, a lot of exercises have been done in the Reserve Bank of India, and here too, I quote from

the same book and he says here, "studies done in the Reserve Bank of India have established that an inflation rate of about 6 per cent per year, GDP growth has been found to be optimal". This does not mean that if you have 6 per cent rate of inflation, you can sit back and say we have an optimal rate of inflation. Obviously, anything less than 6 per cent or 5 per cent or 4 per cent is certainly to be desirable. But the fact of the matter is, Sir, that according to all economic studies that have been done by unbiased observers, an inflation rate of 5 to 6 per cent is something the economy can learn to live with, provided, of course, it is growing at 6 to 7 per cent per year in real terms. Sir, let me now come to the crux of the debate—the current inflationary spiral. Why are we having inflation in India today? And, is this something unprecedented; is this something that could have been avoided; is this something that is the result of the profligacy of the UPA Government? Sir, here I would like to refresh the memory of Dr. Murli Manohar Joshi, who seems to think that the spurt of inflation has been triggered by the UPA Government. Sir, I have here monthly figures from April, 2000 onwards, again using an imperfect index, however, imperfect that may be, we are comparing likes with likes. Sir, in September 2000, inflation was 6.5 per cent; October, 2000, 7.6 per cent; November 2000, 7.6 per cent; December 2000, 8.5 per cent; January 2001, 8.7 per cent; February 2001, 8.3 per cent and March 2001, 8.4 per cent. This is an 8 per cent episode sustained over a period of four and a half months when his Government was in power. Now, Sir, what is this current high rate of inflation that we are talking about? For July 2004, it was 7.6 per cent; August 2004, 8.5 per cent, very high; September 2004, 7.8 per cent, very high; October 2004, 7.3 per cent; November 2004, provisional estimate is again 7.3 per cent. Now, if you look at what is happening today, it is not abnormal, as to what happened three years ago, or four years ago. It is not something that is unique; it is not something that is caused by the profligacy or the mismanagement. This is as much a mismanagement of the economy as the 8 per cent or so that you had for four to five months continuously under the NDA regime. So, rather that blaming politics, rather that blaming the Governments, I think, we should look at the underlying causes as to why we are having this continuous inflation during the last four to five months. Sir, if you look at all the numbers, 65 per cent of the inflation, 65 per cent of the inflation, is caused only by four items -- the price of coal, the price of steel, the price of mineral products and petroleum prices. Increase of prices in these four items accounts for something like

65 per cent of the increase in prices in the last five months. Now, Sir, we had a very long lecture by the distinguished Minister of Petroleum last week on the increase in petroleum prices. I don't have to repeat the numbers that the Minister gave us. But, let me refresh our memories. March 2002, the crude Indian basket, 23 dollars a barrel; April 2004, 32 dollars a barrel; August 2004, 41 dollars a barrel; September, 2004, 39 dollars a barrel. October 2004, 44 dollars a barrel; and November 2004, 39 dollars a barrel. So, if you are comparing on an average 40 dollars a barrel with on an average 23 dollars a barrel, you have a very major reason why there has been an inflationary spurt. And the first reason clearly is the increase in petroleum prices, which no Government could have anticipated. Any Government, whatever the Government of the day, would have had to withstand this oil shock. Why are prices of commodities increasing? Dr. Murli Manohar Joshi asked this question. And it is a very relevant question that he has asked as to why the Government has not been able to control prices of mineral commodities. I will come to essential commodities a little later.

Sir, if you look at the Annual Report of the Reserve Bank of India, 2003-04, which was released recently, you will find—and, I hope, Dr. Murli Manohar Joshi will have time to read this—that there is a very elaborate discussion on why the prices of commodities are rising. And the prices of commodities are rising simply because the world economy is coming back into a growth trajectory—the growth of China, the growth in the OECD countries and the growth in India itself. If you look at the table on page 43, in English version of the Reserve Bank of India Annual Report, there is a chart which shows international commodity price movements. In the last five months, international commodities have increased by 35 per cent year on year. This is unprecedented and this points to the revival of economic growth not only largely in the Sough-East Asia but also in the OECD countries. And India being an open economy cannot be an exception to this price trend.

As I have mentioned to you, 65 per cent of the increase in the prices in the last 5-6 months has been on account of these four commodities, and petroleum. Many speakers have spoken about this, but what about prices of essential commodities? If you look at the essential commodities, I am not talking of market prices here; I am not talking of the prices that you are paying in the market, but I am talking of the Wholesale Price Indices,

which, as I have said, are an admittedly imperfect measure, but the only measure that we have. Just look at the prices of essential commodities and this is all published data. It is published by the Minsitry of Industry which is responsible for putting out the price data week after week. If you look at chillies, onions, mustard oil, groundnut, laundry soap and list of all other items, you will find that there is actually a negative inflation, which means, prices are actually falling. Now, where are the commodities where there is actually a high rate of inflation where prices have been going up? Jwar, groundnut oil, fish, sugar, bazra, salt, coking coal, tea, gur and potatoes.....*(Interruptions)*....

SHRI C. RAMACHANDRAIAH (Andhra Pradesh): All are important items. ...*(Interruptions)*....

SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH: Please, listen to me. ...*(Interruptions)*... I am explaining. I am explaining very carefully. There are some essential items where prices have declined, and there are some essential items where prices have gone up. Now, why are prices going up? When we calculate inflation rates, we compare one period of this year with the corresponding period of the previous year. And what has happened? For a large number of these products, the index last year was very low, because prices had declined to abnormally low levels in 2003. And this is not a figment of my imagination, but this is all published data which anybody can have access to. It is all available on the Internet. ...*(Interruptions)*....

SHRI C. RAMACHANDRAIAH: That is the method of compairing the things,. ...*(Interruptions)*....

SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH: Please, listen to me. ...*(Interruptions)*.... This is a game that all government play. This is a game that all of us have played at some point of our lives. This is called the 'base effect'. If the base last year was very low, inflation this year will be very high, and the inflation next year will be very low because the inflation this year is very high. This game goes on. Statistics can be used to prove any point, but you have to go beyond statistics and try to understand why these price increases are taking place. I am not denying that prices of essential commodities have not gone up. I am accepting it. But all I am trying to say is that there are certain essential commodities like potato, tea, bajra, raw jute, fish, groundnut the prices of which are increasing because of the low base effect last year. But rice, wheat, pulses, sugar, mustard oil, groundnut oil, potatoes and tea are a cause for certain concern and I think the Finance

Minister must be asked, when he replies, to tell us as to what steps the Government is talking to see that their supply is not only ensured but ensured at reasonable prices.

Sir, finally, in the last few years, there have been a number of steps that the Government has taken to moderate inflation itself and inflationary expectations also. Sir, one of the points the Dr. Murli Manohar Joshi didn't mention, but he took credit for, was the fact that in the last two years inflation was, indeed, very low. In 2002-03 and 2003-04, inflation rates were, indeed, very low and one of the reasons, Sir, why they were very low is because inflation rate in manufactured products was very low and one of the reasons why that inflation rate was very low is because we had an open economy. Dr. Murli Manohar Joshi, of course, doesn't believe in an open economy. He thinks that we are more of an open and liberal economy than the USA and Japan. In yesterday's Question Hour, that was very evident but the fact of the matter is, the verything that he is criticising, the openness of our economy, has been one of the main reasons why inflationary pressures have been kept under check in the last two years and now that commodity prices have been going up, now that petroleum prices have been going up, we have been seeing a revival of inflationary pressures. Sir, the point I want to make is that every time inflation has shot up in India, in the past, it has either been because of monsoon failure or it has been because of crop failure or it has been because of an oil price shock, whether it was 1973, whether it was 1979 or whether it was 1990. This episode of inflation, Sir, in that way, is fundamentally different from all previous episodes. We have not had very serious drought. We have had an adverse monsoon situation, but the drought has not been very severe. Food price inflation has not been astronomical, essential commodity price has not been astronomical. Therefore, Sir, the sum and substance of the story is that this inflation is producer inflation, it's not consumer inflation. It is an inflation caused by an escalation in producer prices of oil, of coal of steel, of metals and not consumer prices of essential commodities. Therefore, to summarise, I would just request the Finance Minister to enlighten us, firstly, as to what steps he is taking in order to ensure that inflation, as measured, reflects ground reality and secondly, the steps that he is taking to ensure that the prices of those essential commodities that are still showing eight to ten per cent increase are kept under check now that India is faced with an embarrassment of foreign exchange reserves.

Sir, this bring me to my final point. There was a lot of talk about liquidity and the fact of the matter is that, in Economics, there are two views and I would request the former Governor to speak on this perhaps when he gets a chance. There have been two views as to what has been the inflationary effect of the unbridled increase of capital inflows that have taken place into the Indian economy in the last two or three years. Sir, let us look at the last year's data, and I am going to finish in two minutes. Again, the foreign exchange reserves of our country were 71 billion dollars in December, 2002; the foreign exchange reserves in March, 2004 were 112 billion dollars. In other words, there was something like 40 billion dollars increase in foreign exchange reserves in a space of 14 months. Undoubtedly, a great achievement, undoubtedly something that any Government can take credit for, but the fact of the matter is, Sir, that this is not without unintended consequences and the question that I have of the Finance Minister is that this is a very complicated, very complex, very abstract economic issue, but in a simple man's language, can he tell us whether this strong surge in capital inflows into our country has had any effect on the price situation or not? I know , in the last year, there was an effort made to ensure that there should be an appreciation of the rupee like Dr. Murli Manohar Joshi wanted. The policy stance was to allow an appreciation of the rupee whereas the normal tendency was to allow the rupee to depreciate. That might have changed under your stewardship; I do not know. But, Sir, the basic point is that with this quantum of capital inflows coming in, it would not be without its impact on the price-level. The question is to what extent, the current increase in prices could be attributed to the continued surge in capital inflows into the economy which, in one way, reflects the confidence of international investors in India, but, on the other, could be extracting an economic price from the Indian citizens in terms of increase in prices. Thank you, Sir.

SHRI C. RAMACHANDRAIAH: Sir, I feel rather inhibited after hearing Mr. Jairam Ramesh's eloquent speech.....*(Interruptions)*...

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Mr. Chidambaram, you will get a lot of points.

SHRI C. RAMACHANDRAIAH: Sir, this country as got a great economist for its wealth. ...*(Interruptions)*... I know Mr. Jairam Ramesh has joined the club.

SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM: No; he is always part of that.

SHRI C. RAMACHANDRAIAH: Very eloquently, he has tried to build up a case that the so-called inflation is not affecting the cost of living of the common man in this country. I do disagree with the way the wholesale price index is being calculated. I was told that only 40 per cent of the indices are being fed into the Department, and for the rest, i.e. 60 per cent, they are making their own assumptions or are adopting the previous year's figures relating to inflationary prices. But the need of the hour, as he said-and it is my demand also-is that a pragmatic and a realistic yardstick should be formulated. If you go to the grass root levels, if you see the condition of the masses, you can ascertain as to whether the so-called inflation is really there or not, and how the people are being affected by these rising prices. Whatever Mr. Jairam Ramesh has said about the rates of products, which have increased, they are mostly the basic necessities of a common man. Dr. Subbarami Reddy has also said that. It may not have much impact on a person who is getting an income of five lakh rupees. But it has got a tremendous impact on a person who is getting an income of four thousand rupees per month and we just cannot ignore that. The argument has been made in such way that the inflation figures do not seem to be correct, but some indication will be there because for the past five decades, we have been adopting this method of calculating inflation. It is giving some indication. But so far as I am concerned, I have been going round the villages. It has got a tremendous adverse effect on the cost of living of the people. Even tamarind is being sold at Rs.80/- per kg. The price of groundnut, has gone up. Sir, I tell you that it has got a tremendous impact on rural areas. I culled out this information from an article written by the Indian Institute of Public Management. The average income which is most frequently observed income, i.e. the income of the common man in rural areas, is less than 100 dollars per annum. Monthly, it works out to be less than four hundred rupees. On cereals, he is spending Rs.96/-; on milk and milk products, Rs.93/-, On vegetables and edible oils, Rs.87/-; i.e. on food, Rs.276/-. On fuel he is spending Rs.44/-, and on clothing and other things, Rs.45/-. The entire income is being spent on these purposes. Can we say that the price increase has not affected the common man? How do we argue that the so-called inflation rate has not affected anybody and the people are living comfortably in the villages? It would not cut any ice. We don't agree with this argument. If the price line goes up, definitely, it will adversely affect the living conditions of the people in the country. The crude has been made the villain. I don't think that it is the only villain. Of

course, import of crude is costing us Rs.1 lakh crores. But it is not the only villain of inflation. It does not have a proportionate reduction in the rate also. when it was quoted at 53 dollars per barrel, the inflation rate had gone up to 8.3 per cent. Now, crude is quoted at 41 dollars per barrel. Why hasn't inflation come down proportionately? I read in an article that an increase of 10 dollars per barrel should have an incremental effect of 2.6 per cent in the inflation rate in this country, whereas it is 0.8 per cent. I do admit that. But this volatility has to be insulated. I read in the newspapers that we can't isolate ourselves. But I appeal to you that the interests of the vulnerable sections have to be insulated and those have to be protected.

What is your policy on subsidies? The Government has to come out on that. On one occasion, the Finance Minister said that we were importing inflation. To what extent are we importing it? Is the entire inflation being imported? If that is the case, why do they blame you? It is true that we have got some import elements in our economy and there is some percentage of volatility. So, we have to bear it and we have to insulate ourselves. That is where we demand your ingenuity, your genius, to protect the interests of the common man. Just because the crude oil price has gone up, you increase the petroleum prices! What expertise is being demonstrated by you? What is the price management policy of the Government? What exactly, is it? Have you got any policy? Poverty alleviation should become part of your management policy. What is happening?

I am not here to settle scores because successive Governments have been ruling the country and the economy has been growing. I do admit that. I don't say that the Congress Government is there and they are altruistic or the BJP was there and they had sinned. We are not concerned with this type of arguments. We are concerned more about the people, how the people are feeling. They don't mind whether the BJP is in power or the Congress is in power. They mind whether you provide good governance, comfortable living and enable them to live with dignity. That is more important.

The Finance Minister made a very pious statement. What is the human face of your reforms? Is it the increase in the price of petroleum products, the increase in the price of sugar, the increase in the price of steel, the increase in the price of cement? The entire construction activity has come

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to a standstill and lakhs of construction workers are out of employment. What is the human face of the Government? There are a number of reasons. Why has the inflation gone up? There is increase in liquidity, increase in crude oil price, etc. Everybody is trying to make his or her own villains. Even liquidity has been mopped up recently. Dr. Venugopal Reddy has announced a Credit Policy where he has increased the repo rate by 0.25 per cent and the CRR by 0.5 per cent. With that, you could be able to set apart some amount from the market and to that extent the liquidity has been reduced. So, what exactly is the reasons for this increase in inflation? Is it more liquidity in the market? Is it because of demand pull?

[THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRIMATI SARLA MAHESHWARI) in the Chair].

Is there any shortage of products? The Government has to come out with a clear-cut policy as to what exactly the reason is and find out solutions. So far the Employment Guarantee Bill has not been introduced. I do not know what will be the fate of this Bill. We felt very happy when this scheme was announced. We did not question as to how you are going to mop up resources. You have to work out the nitty-gritty of it. You should assure the nation and tell them when the Bill will come; when it will be passed and when it will be implemented. Hundreds of people are committing suicide.

SHRI SANJAY NIRUPAM (Maharashtra): That will be referred to the Standing Committee!

SHRI C. RAMACHANDRAIAH: That might be the solution. (*Interruptions*)... There is no point of blaming each other.

SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM: Will you yield to me? This kind of criticism is really very cynical. For six years, the Government you supported, did not even talk about the Employment Guarantee Bill. This Government, as soon as it came, said, "We will introduce the Employment Guarantee Bill and in the meanwhile, as a temporary measure, we will start the Food-for-Work Programme". The Food-for-Work Programme was started in your State on 14 November, 2004. The Prime Minister and the Minister concerned are on record that the Employment Guarantee Bill will be introduced in the current Session. These are two facts. (*Interruptions*). Just a minute. I have not completed. I have not yielded to you. For six years, you did not talk

about the Bill and when we say that we are introducing the Bill in this Session, you stand up and say very piously, "You are not going to introduce the Bill." Just wait for a few more days.

SHRI C. RAMACHANDRAIAH: Is it not our right to know that?

SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM: It is. We have said it.

SHRI C. RAMACHANDRAIAH: You are talking about the Food-for-Work Programme which was implemented in my State seven years back by spending Rs. 5,000 crore. You call it a pilot scheme. *(Interruptions)*. You call it a pilot scheme. This was implemented in my State seven years back.

SHRI V. NARAYANASAMY: In spite of that the farmers were committing suicide. (*Interruptions*). The farmers were dying.

SHRI C. RAMACHANDRAIAH: Mr. Narayanasamy, the Finance Minister is quite capable. He can answer me. He can tackle me. He does not need your assistance. (*Interruptions*).

SHRI V. NARAYANASAMY: Madam, I am not intervening. I was just saying that they had been practically running the NDA Government.

SHRI C. RAMACHANDRAIAH: He does not need your assistance. You have selected a very capable man as the Finance Minister.

उपसभाध्यक्ष (श्रीमती सरला माहेश्वरी): मैं माननीय सदस्य से निवेदन करना चाहूंगी कि आप बहुत महत्वपूर्ण मुद्दे पर बात कर रहे हैं। आप अपनी बात कहिए।

SHRI SANJAY NIRUPAM: Why is it going to the Standing Committee?

उपसभाध्यक्ष (श्रीमती सरला माहेश्वरी): संजय जी कृपया उन्हें बोलने दीजिए।....(व्यवधान)

श्री नारायण सिंह केसरी (मध्य प्रदेश): महोदया, मेरा एक व्यवस्था का प्रश्न है। सदस्य आपस में बात कर रहे हैं जब कि उन्हें आप के माध्यम से अपनी बात कहनी चाहिए। ...(व्यवधान)

SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM: You study it and come back in February.

SHRI C. RAMACHANDRAIAH: The country needs this programme.

SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM: I agree with you.

SHRI C. RAMACHANDRAIAH: You have admitted that the monsoon has failed.

उपसभाध्यक्ष (श्रीमती सरला माहेश्वरी): अच्छा, आप शांति बनाए रखिए और उन्हें बोलने दीजिए। Mr. Ramachandraiah, kindly address the Chair.

SHRI C. RAMACHANDRAIAH: What I am saying is this. The Finance Minister said, "For six years you have supported the Government, but you did not question them." Mr. Minister, you go through the records. Wherever necessary, we had questioned them. Unfortunately, now they have entered into our shoes.

SHRI V. NARAYANASAMY: Unfortunately, whatever suggestions you gave to the NDA Government, they did not follow those suggestions.

SHRI C. RAMACHANDRAIAH: They said, "The UPA Government cannot last a day without our support and therefore, they have to hear us, bear us and follow us". This statement was made by them. Kindly drive them properly. *(Interruptions)*. It is an unmistakable message that you have given.

श्री नारायण सिंह केसरी: महोदया....

उपसभाध्यक्ष (श्रीमती सरला माहेश्वरी): आप बैठिए।

श्री नारायण सिंह केसरी: सवाल यह है कि अभी आप टी०वी० पर दिखायी दे रहे हैं। सदस्य को इस सदन की मर्यादा को देखते हुए आप के माध्यम से बोलना चाहिए।

उपसभाध्यक्ष (श्रीमती सरला माहेश्वरी): आप बैठिए, कोई लड़ाई नहीं हो रही है, बात हो रही है। चलिए, रामचन्द्रैया जी बोलिए।

SHRI C. RAMACHANDRAIAH: There was a newspaper report yesterday wherein the Finance Minister has said," The worst is over" Is it really that the worst is over?

SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM: Quote me completely. I said, "Unless there are external shocks on the crude oil front, the worst is over". Please quote my whole sentence correctly. If there are new and unaccepted crude oil shocks, then we may face another inflationary splurge. But if there are no new and unexpected crude oil shocks, the worst is indeed over.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRIMATI SARLA MAHESHWARI): We hope so.

SHRI C. RAMACHANDRAIAH: It may be half-quoted. But when he had said that, he meant that the worst is prevailing. He had also stated, "All other sectors of the economy, except agriculture, are doing well. So,

there is deficiency in Kharif crop which can be made good in Rabi". That is what he has said. when such is the case, why has the revenue deficit gone up to 78 per cent? It should have been 45 per cent. You can say that it is because you have made some concessions in cutting the excise duty; that too, in the last part of August, you have done it. And, when the manufacturing activity has not gone up, when contribution to GDP from the services sector has not gone up, how can we say that the worst is over? It may be half-quoted; but even now the crude oil price is very high. So, what I am trying to say is, let us give a correct picture to the people. And, there is no surplus in rural areas to invest in the stock market. Now, from where is the money coming into the stock market? It is the hot money. People in the rural areas hardly have enough money to make both ends meet with their meagre income, especially in this inflationary splurge.

उपसभाध्यक्ष (श्रीमती सरला माहेश्वरी): रामचन्द्रैया जी, आप कृपया चेयर को एड्रेस करें।

SHRI C. RAMACHANDRAIAH: I was interrupted continuously. So I lost track.

SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM: We are enjoying your talk. That is why we are interrupting.

SHRI C. RAMACHANDRAIAH: Let us give the correct picture. Let us be pragmatic. Let us not settle scores. People are looking at you. People have confidence in you because the country is being ruled by eminent economists.And, there are expectations. So, it is better that you don't get poor mark sheet. Let it be on a higher scale so that the country also gets benefited. It is not that I want to criticise you. But my criticism will always be constructive. Take it in good spirit, and try to improve the economy because it is not the way as we have been thinking . Thank you.

डा॰ कुमकुम राय (बिहार): धन्यवाद, उपसभाध्यक्ष महोदया, यह संयोग की ही बात कही जायेगी कि इस वर्ष 1 जून, 2004 से 28 जुलाई, 2004 के बीच पूरे देश में कुल वर्षा सामान्य से 40 प्रतिशत कम हुई। परिणामस्वरूप तिलहन, गन्ना, मोटे अनाजों की बुवाई बहुत धीमी हुई। कई फसलों को सिंचाई के अभाव में काफी नुकसान हुआ, हालांकि बाद में देश के अनेक भागों में अच्छी बारिश हुई। फिर भी एक अध्ययन के अनुसार इस वर्ष कृषि उपज की अनुमानित वार्षिक वृद्धि दर 3 प्रतिशत से घटकर 2 प्रतिशत हो सकती है। भारत में जनसंख्या अभी भी 1.8 प्रतिशत की वार्षिक दर से बढ़ रही है। इसके मद्देनजर कृषि उपज में यह कमी चिन्तनीय हो सकती है। चीनी

और खाद्य तेलों के उत्पादन में गिरावट की खबरों के बीच अनाज की कीमतें भी बढ़ने लगी हैं। आज ग्लोबलाइजेशन का जमाना है और आज इस दौर में घरेलू बाजार अन्तर्राष्ट्रीय बाजारों के उतार-चढ़ाव से प्रभावित होते हैं और इसीलिए हाल के दिनों में डीज़ल, पेट्रोल और रसोई गैस की कीमतें बढ़ी। पेट्रोलियम पदार्थों की कीमतों में वृद्धि के प्रत्यक्ष और परोक्ष प्रभाव देखे जा सकते हैं। कार, स्कूटर, मोटर साईकिल चालकों को अब अधिक खर्च करना पड़ रहा है।

उपसभाध्यक्ष (श्रीमती सरला माहेश्वरी): कुमकुम राय जी, एक मिनट। माननीय सदस्यों से मैं निवेदन करूंगी कि कृपया सदन की व्यवस्था बनाए रखिए और आपस में बातचीत न करिए। इससे बोलने वाले वक्ता को बहुत परेशानी होती है। अब बोलिए, आप।

डा॰ कुमकुम राय: मैडम, इस प्रकार की महंगाई के जो परोक्ष प्रभाव होते है। वे बहुत व्यापक और बहुत हानिकारक होते हैं। समाज का हर वर्ग इससे प्रभावित होता है। ईंधन महंगा होने के कारण माल-भाड़ा बढ़ जाता है और उपभोग की हर चीज महंगी हो जाती है। इससे आम आदमी की मुश्किलें बढ़ती हैं। श्रमिक संघ अधिक मजदूरी, अधिक वेतन और अधिक महंगाई भत्ते की मांग करते हैं। इस कारण मुद्रास्फीति दिनों-दिन सामाजिक असंतोष का कारण बनती जा रही है। भारत को अपनी कुल जरूरत का लगभग 70 प्रतिशत पेट्रोल, ऑयल-लुब्रीकेंट्स आयात करना पड़ता है। देश में यातायात, औद्योगिक विकास और कृषि विकास आयातित तेलों की पर्याप्त पूर्ति पर ही निर्भर करता है। इनका कोई विकल्प अभी तक उपलब्ध नहीं है। मैं सरकार से अनुरोध करना चाहूंगी कि हमें वैकल्पिक ऊर्जा और वैकल्पिक ईंधन पर ज्यादा गंभीरता से विचार करना पड़ेगा। अभी तक हम बायो-डीजल के विषय में हल्के-फुल्के ढंग से सिर्फ चर्चा भर करते आए हैं, लेकिन अभी तक इस विषय में कोई कार्यक्रम, आधारभूत योजना या कार्य शुरू नहीं कर पाए हैं। इसलिए इस क्षेत्र में और ज्यादा गंभीरता से मनन करते हुए हमें इस पर विचार करना होगा और इसके वैकल्पिक उपाय सोचने होंगे।

महोदया, हमारे यहां जो गरीबी है, जो गरीब लोग हैं, उनकी क्रय-शक्ति महंगाई के कारण और घट जाती है। देश में लोग भूख से मरते हैं, यहां सवाल यह नहीं है कि राजस्थान में मर रहे हैं या महाराष्ट्र में मर रहे हैं। किसान आत्महत्या कर रहे हैं, यह बात भी देश के विभिन्न कोनों से समय समय पर सुनाई देती रही है। इस तरह की बातें किसी भी लोकतांत्रिक देश में प्रजातांत्रिक ढंग से चुनी हुई सरकार के लिए अच्छी नहीं हैं। सरकार रिजर्व बैंक से परामर्श करके शीघ्र ही आवश्यक मौद्रिक और राजकोषीय कदम उठाए, जैसे बैंक में लघु बचत योजनाओं पर ब्याज-दर की बढ़ोतरी करना, बाजार में खाद्यानों की जमाखेरी और कालाबाजारी को रोकना तथा पेट्रोलियम पदार्थों पर सीमा उत्पाद शुल्क में कटौती करना, आदि ऐसे उपाय हैं, जिन पर सरकार विचार कर सकती है। हमें हर प्रकार के उपायों से मंहगाई को नियंत्रित करना ही होगा क्योंकि एक अरब से ज्यादा आबादी

वाले हमारे इस मुल्क में बीपीएल, यानि गरीबी सीमा से नीचे जीवन बसर करने वाले लोगों की संख्या 40 प्रतिशत तक पहुंच रही हैं। ऐसे लोगों का हमे ध्यान रखना होगा कि इनकी झोपड़ियों में भी चूल्हे से धुंआ निकले, इनके चूल्हों में आग जले। इसलिए मैं एक आग्रह जरूर करना चाहती हूं माननीय वित्त मंत्री महोदय से, कि आम आदमी की जरूरत की चीजों की कीमतें न बढ़ें, भले ही कार की कीमत बढ़ जाए, फिज की कीमत बढ़ जाए, एसी॰ की कीमत बढ़ जाए क्योंकि इनको खरीदने वाले जो पैसे वाले लोग हैं, उनको ज्यादा दिक्कत नहीं होती, लेकिन जब दाल, रोटी और नमक की कीमतें बढ़ती हैं तो उसका असर इन गरीब लोगों पर पड़ता है। मैं सरकार को इसके लिए धन्यवाद भी देना चाहती हूं कि पेट्रोल, डीजल के दाम तो बढ़ाए गए, लेकिन माननीय लालू प्रसाद यादव जी के आग्रह पर केरोसिन-ऑयल के मूल्य में वृद्धि नहीं की गई। यह एक बहुत बड़े संतोष की बात है। इसी संदर्भ में मैं सरकार का ध्यान आकृष्ट करना चाहूंगी कि वर्ष 1998 से अब तक पेट्रोल पदार्थों के दाम 19 बार बढ़े हैं और 4 बार, 8 बार उसकी कीमतें कम भी हुई हैं, इसलिए हमें हाइड्रोजन एनर्जी या हीलियम एनर्जी पर ज्यादा विचार करना होगा ओर उस तरह की योजना हमें बनानी होंगी।

महोदया, आज मंहगाई का आलम यह है कि पानी 12/- रुपए लिटर बिक रहा है। इसलिए इन तमाम बातों के ध्यान में रखते हुए मंहगाई पर नियंत्रण के लिए हमें निश्चित रूप से कुछ आवश्यक कदम अतिशीघ्र उठाने चाहिएं। अंत में, मैं अपनी बात इन दो पंक्तियों के साथ समाप्त करना चाहूंगी–

हो चुकी पीर पर्वत सी, अब पिघलनी चाहिए।
इस हिमालय से एक नई गंगा निकलनी चाहिए।

धन्यवाद, उपसभाध्यक्ष महोदया।

SHRI M.P. ABDUSSAMAD SAMADANI (Kerala): Madam, I take this opportunity to draw the attention of the hon. Minister and the Government to certain matters related to the other side of the picture. Madam, in my humble opinion, there may be, at least, three major reasons for this rise in prices, which we are discussing today.

First and foremost is related with checks and balances with the economc condition in the country, about which details have been discussed by experts and hon. Members who have spoken before me. Secondly, Madam, it is related with, I think, the downfall that is faced by our agricultural economy. That is a legacy of the past Government. I have a request to those people, who are seriously participating in this discussion and making

criticisms against the present Government. They should turn their attention to the record left by the previous Government, with regard to the price rise, and their policy of export and import. All these factors contributed to the price rise. Not only that, that even affected the public distribution system all over the country. And that legacy is still there.

I think, the present Government and especially the Finance Minister, who himself is a genius in economics, will be making very serious attempts to set the record straight, as also to undo the wrongs done by the previous Government, in the past, against the poorer classes in the country.

Madam, I specially refer to the agricultural economy. Only when the rural condition is perfect, and only when the life in rural areas of the country is in a very sound condition, only then the economic condition of the country will be sound. For example, when they are not able to purchase essential commodities with a low price, then, naturally, the impact is upon the total condition of the price rise; and that contributes to the increase in price rise.

When recently I had an occasion to visit a bookshop in our State, Kerala, Madam, I was surprised when the bookshop manager told me, "Now-a-days, the books are not being sold as before". May be, people will be thinking that now-a-days, it is happening because of television and the electronic media or the so-called explosion in information technology. No, it is not because of that. The manager of the bookshop told me that most of the people who purchase books belong to the middle-class. The readers belong to the middle-class and the rural areas of the State. They manage to purchase books by the income they get from the agricultural products. But, when the agricultural economy faces great trials and tribulations, and when it is in a state of downfall, then, naturally, that affects the entire economic conditon.

So, my request to the hon. Minister is, please do the maximum to enhance, or bring the agricultural economy to our expectation. I think, that will be a great positive stop to control the price rise in the country.

There was a period when people in the rural areas were surprised to hear that water should be purchased. I remember my boyhood days. When people who had gone abroad, or those who lived in cities, when they returned to their villages and said, "I purchased a bottle of water", the

people who lived in the rural areas were surprised, "Water sold!" But now, what is the condition? At every railway station, at every bus-stop water is being sold in bottles and bottles.

It has been said that in the coming years, the war between nations would be fought not for political power but for water. We are going to face such a condition. In this background there must be a very careful and very serious planning. It is not only the problem related to economics. I think, it is a problem which has its roots in every area of the human life.

Finally, Madam, the greatest and the gravest problem is related to consumerism. The phenomenon of consumerism is going on and is conquering the psyche of the society. Everywhere, now-a-days, there are only signs of consumerism. To what extent will we go now with this consumerism? There must be some control on the needs of human beings. If the needs of the human beings are controlled--maybe, in a deeper sense of the attitude to this problem--we can say that this phenomenon can be controlled. But everwhere there are advertisements inviting to consumerism. The children, the elders, the old, every body is considered on the commercial level now-a-days. Everything that brings bread is given value. All the other things are neglected. Now-a-days, Madam, in our country, in certain areas, the old-age homes have increased, the *vridhasadans.* Why? It is because people believe, especially the young sons and daughters of the family believe that if the parents are not able to bring bread, if the old parents, mother and father, are not able to bring bread, if they are not able to contribute materially to the well-being of the family, then they are to be neglected, they are to be banished and sent out. This is the condition of consumerism and the impact of consumerism in our society. With regard to consumerism, the greed of the upper-class is mainly responsible for its growth and the poor people have to pay for that. The poor people are paying but the real responsible factor behind this phenomenon is the greed of the upper-class. Our new Government has already taken charge. We have great expectations from the Government. Though it will take time, this kind of phenomenon of price hike has to be controlled. There should not be any delay. I conclude, Madam, by requesting the Government and the hon. Minister to take serious and positive steps in this regard. Also, at the same time, I request the Government to pay attention to the areas of the problem relating not only with our economic but also our social and cultural life. Thank you.

श्रीमती माया सिंह (मध्य प्रदेश): माननीय उपसभाध्यक्ष महोदया, आज इस सदन में बढ़ती हुई महंगाई के ऊपर चर्चा हो रही है और मैं समझती हूं कि यह मुद्दा देश के आम नागरिकों से जुड़ा हुआ है। इससे हर वर्ग के लोग प्रभावित हो रहे हैं। इस आसमान छूती महंगाई का सबसे ज्यादा प्रभाव मध्यम वर्ग और खासकर गरीबी रेखा के नीचे जीवन-यापन करने वाले लोगों पर पड़ रहा है। चाहे वेतन-भोगी कर्मचारी हों, पेंशन प्राप्त करने वाले लोग हों, कोई भी इस महंगाई की मार से अछूता नहीं है। चतुर्थ श्रेणी के कर्मचारी हों, घर में काम करने वाले नौकर–चाकर हों, झुग्गी–झोंपड़ियों में रहने वाले लोग हों, हर वर्ग के व्यक्ति और इस स्तर पर जितने भी जीवन–यापन करने वाले लोग हैं, वे सब महंगाई की मार के शिकार हो रहे हैं। इसकी जिम्मेदारी केन्द्र में बैठी हुई वर्तमान सरकार की जन-विरोधी नितियां और फैंसले हैं।

उपसभाध्यक्ष महोदया, महंगाई का मुद्दा आम जनता के पेट से जुड़ा हुआ है और इस पर किसी तरह की राजनीति नहीं होनी चाहिए। सत्ता में बैठे लोग आंखों देखी इस महंगाई को अपने बेतुके तर्कों के आधार पर झुठलाने की कोशिश कर रहे हैं, नये–नये बहाने ढूढ़ रहे हैं। वे गलत फैसलों और नीतियों को सुधारने के बजाय दूसरों पर आरोप मढ़ते हुए मूल समस्या से आम जनता का ध्यान बांटने की कोशिश करते है। मुझे लगता है कि वे देश की इस गंभीर समस्या की तरफ ध्यान नहीं देना चाहते हैं या इसे हल्का सोच रहे हैं। मुझे ऐसा लगता है कि सत्ता में आने के बाद इनका आम आदमी की परेशानियों से कोई सरोकार नही है।

उपसभाध्यक्ष महोदया, एनडीए की सरकार छह साल रही है। उसने छह बजट पेश किये हैं। लेकिन इन छह वर्षों में महंगाई के ऊपर कभी चर्चा नहीं हुई है। इन छह वर्षों में मुद्रास्फीति की दर 3.5 प्रतिशत और 4 प्रतिशत के बीच में रही है। आखिरी वर्ष में जहां मुद्रास्फीति की दर तीन से चार प्रतिशत रही है, वहीं विकास की दर 8 प्रतिशत तक जा पहुंची। इससे स्पष्ट है कि पूर्व की एनडीए सरकार की आर्थिक नीतियां संतुलित थीं और देश के विकास को बढ़ाने वाली थीं। लेकिन यूपीए सरकार ने छह माह में जो आर्थिक नीतियां तय की हैं, जो बजट पेश किया है, उसका दुष्परिणाम है कि आज जनता महंगाई से परेशान है। ऐसा नहीं है कि एनडीए की सरकार के समय सूखा नहीं पड़ा, अकाल नहीं पड़ा, बाढ़ नहीं आयी, लेकिन उस समय सूखाग्रस्त राज्यों को अनाज की भरपूर आपूर्ति कर, काम के बदले अनाज के कार्यक्रम चलाकर, अनाज की कीमतों पर भी काबू रखा गया। इसी तरीके से अंतर्राष्ट्रीय बाजारों में पैट्रोलियम उत्पादों की कीमतों में वृद्धि से हमारे देश में भी पैट्रोल और डीज़ल के दाम बढ़ते हैं, जिसका प्रभाव आम चीज़ों पर पड़ता है, इससे इंकार नहीं किया जा सकता है। लेकिन एनडीए की सरकार के कार्यकाल में भी 6–6 बार पैट्रोल और डीज़ल की कीमतें बढ़ी हैं, लेकिन उसका प्रभाव आम जनता के इस्तेमाल में आने वाली चीज़ों पर नहीं पड़ने दिया गया। ऐसा क्यों? उस समय मुद्रास्फीति बेलगाम नहीं हुई, ऐसा क्यों? मैं माननीय मंत्री जी से जानना चाहती हूं, पूछना चाहती हूं। लेकिन यूपीए की सरकार पिछले 6 महीने से सत्ता

में है और 6 फीसदी से ज्यादा महंगाई बढ़ी है। सितम्बर के माह में तो इसने रिकॉर्ड ही तोड़ दिया, जब महंगाई आठ प्रतिशत तक बढ़ गयी। विकास की दर का कम होना और महंगाई का बढ़ना, ये अच्छी अर्थव्यवस्था के लक्षण नहीं हैं। उपसभाध्यक्ष महोदया, सुविधा सम्पन्न लोगों को तो बढ़ती महंगाई से कोई फर्क नहीं पड़ता है, लेकिन असर पड़ता है, परेशान जो वर्ग है, वह मध्यम वर्ग है, निम्न वर्ग और गरीब वर्ग है। आम आदमी यह जानना चाहता है कि वे कौन सी आर्थिक नीतियां इस वर्तमान सरकार की हैं जिन पर अमल करने से 6 महीने के अंदर ही महंगाई की रफतार इतनी तेज हो गयी। महोदया, कई बार मेरे मन में यह प्रश्न उठता है, जब बार–बार यह कहा जाता है कि अंतर्राष्ट्रीय बाजार में पैट्रोलियम पदार्थों की कीमतें बढ़ गयी हैं, जिनका प्रभाव हमारे देश में महंगाई के रूप में देखने को मिलता है। मैं यह जानना चाहती हूं कि मंत्री जी, क्या हमारे आर्थिक तंत्र या हमारी अर्थव्यवस्था पर, इन 6 माह के दौरान अंतर्राष्ट्रीय बाजार का नियंत्रण बढ़ गया है? जैसा कि माननीय मंत्री जी और सत्ता पक्ष के मित्र पिछले दिनों बार–बार यह तर्क दोहराते रहे, उससे लगता है कि विदेश के लोग जब चाहे तब, कभी भी भारतीय जनता की महंगाई से कमर तोड़ सकते हैं। यानी जो देश हमें पैट्रोल और डीज़ल का निर्यात करते हैं? अगर वे देश उसका निर्यात बंद कर दें तो इसका मतलब है कि हमारे देश की तो हर गतिविधि बंद हो जाएगी और ऐसा मैं इसलिए कह रही हूं कि सत्ता पक्ष के लोगों ने अंतर्राष्ट्रीय बाज़ार में कीमतें बढ़ने का जो भय हमारे देश की जनता को दिखाने का प्रयास किया है, इन परिस्थितियों को नियंत्रित करने के बजाय, उससे ऐसा लगता है कि बेतहाशा बढ़ी कीमतों पर काबू पाना उनके बूते के बाहर की बात है। जय राम जी, जो बहुत ही अनुभवी अर्थशास्त्री हैं, उन्होंने अभी अपने वक्तव्य में कहा कि यह एक ऐसा खेल है जिसे हर सरकार खेलती है और यह निरंतर चलता है। मुझे यह सुनकर बड़ा दुख हुआ कि यहां आम आदमी, देश का गरीब व्यक्ति, जिसके पास खाने के लिए रोटी नहीं है, बच्चों को पीने के लिए दूध नहीं है,बीमार है तो दवाई नहीं है और वे आंकड़ों की बाजीगरी के .चक्रव्यूह में देश की गरीब जनता को फंसाना चाहते हैं। लेकिन मैं आपसे यह कहना चाहती हूं कि गरीब जनता को इन सबसे कोई मतलब नहीं है, उसे तो रोटी, कपड़ा, मकान और रोज़गार चाहिए। जो वादे आपने सरकार में आने से पहले जनता से किए थे, वह आपसे उनका उत्तर मांग रही है। महोदया, इन 6 माह में देश की जनता का वह आत्मसम्मान, वह आत्मविश्वास,जो एनडीए की सरकार के समय बना था, जिसके कारण हम 2020 में अपने देश को विकसित देश बनाने की बात कह रहे थे, कमजोर हुआ है। वैसे 13 मई को जिस दिन जोड़–तोड़ करके कांग्रेस की नेतृत्व की सरकार बनी, उसी दिन लोगों में आम चर्चा शुरू हो गयी थी कि अब महंगाई बढ़ने वाली है। जो आशंका उस दिन आम जनता के घरों में, परिवारों में, चौपालों में व्यक्त की गयी...(व्यवधान)...

उपसभाध्यक्ष (श्रीमती सरला माहेश्वरी) : कृपया शांति बनाए रखें। मंत्री जी जवाब देने के लिए यहां मौजूद हैं।

श्रीमती माया सिंह: वह सच साबित हो रही है। वैसे भी कांग्रेस और महंगाई का तो पुराना साथ है, चोली–दामन का साथ है। 1947 से 1995 तक, ढाई वर्ष आप छोड़ दें तो कांग्रेस की सरकार 45 साल देश में रही और मुद्रास्फीति की दर इन वर्षों में 29 तक भी रही है, वैसे 10 और 16 प्रतिशत तक तो रहती ही थी। लेकिन क्या कारण है कि 1998 से लेकर अब तक, इन 6 सालों में मुद्रास्फीति की दर, एन०डी०ए० के समय में तीन प्रतिशत से लेकर चार प्रतिशत रही और एन०डी०ए० सरकार के पास ऐसी कोई जादू की लकड़ी नहीं थी, बल्कि उसकी अच्छी राजकोषीय वित्तीय नीतियों के कारण, वित्तीय स्थिति हमारे समय में बनी। आपने तीन दशक पहले एक 'गरीबी हटाओ' का नारा दिया था। आप सत्ता में आए, गरीब को और गरीब किया, अमीर को और अमीर बनाया। इसके बाद आपने दूसरा नारा दिया कि 'कांग्रेस का हाथ, आम आदमी के साथ', इसके बाद क्या हुआ? 6 महीनों से इन आम आदमियों पर जो मार पड़ रही है, उसे वही जानता है। बढती हुई महंगाई को देखकर लगता है कि आपका यह नारा भी बदल गया है। आपकी कथनी और करनी में अन्तर, कोई नई बात नहीं है। आम जन की जो बुनियादी सेवाएं हैं, ...(**समय की घंटी**)...उन पर सर्विस टैक्स का प्रावधान, यही महंगाई का सबसे बड़ा कारक है। जनहित में चलाई जाने वाली सारी योजनाएं बन्द कर दी गई हैं। उनका क्रियान्वयन बंद कर दिया गया है। प्रधानमंत्री ग्रामीण सड़क योजना, चतुर्भुज सड़क योजना, जय प्रकाश नारायण आवास योजना का क्या हुआ? अन्नपूर्णा योजना, जिसमें काम के बदले अनाज दिया जाता था और साथ ही साथ गरीबों को दो रुपए किलो गेहूं तथा तीन रुपए किलो चावल दिया जाता था, सब बंद कर दिया गया है। इससे गरीबों की मुश्किलें बढ़ी हैं। इसके साथ–साथ दूसरी तरफ स्टील, इस्पात और सीमेंट आदि सब महंगे हो गए हैं इसके कारण निर्माण कार्य भी प्रभावित हुआ है, बेरोजगारी बढ़ी है, मजदूरों की मुसीबतें बढ़ी हैं। महोदया, एक अर्थशास्त्री की सरकार में देश की अर्थव्यवस्था चरमरा जाए तो इसे देश और देश की जनता का दुर्भाग्य ही कहा जाएगा। यहां सदन में सत्ता पक्ष में बैठे मेरे सम्माननीय सदस्य की घरेलू अर्थव्यवस्था में पता नहीं कितना फर्क पड़ा है? मैं नहीं जानती कि असर पड़ा या नहीं पड़ा है, लेकिन इस महंगाई से आम लोगों के घरों में जरूर गृह कलह शुरू हो गई है। उनके घरों में झगड़े शुरू हो गए हैं। गृहणियों के घर का बजट चौपट हो गया है। हम किस–किस चीज में कटौती करें, समझ में नही आता है, दूध में करें, शक्कर में करें, सब्जियों में करें,तेल में करें, अनाज में करें, कपड़ों में करें, दवाई में करें, ये सब वस्तुएं गरीब की पहुंच से बाहर हो गई हैं। रसोई गैस की कीमतें बढ़ने से देश भर की महिलाएं दुखी हैं और अपनी वेदना को व्यक्त करने के लिए, अपने घरों को छोड़कर उन्हें यहां दिल्ली की सड़कों पर आना पड़ा। गैस सिलेंडर की कीमतों में बढ़ोत्तरी, ऐसी अत्याचारी है। ऐसी पीड़ादायक है जिसने हमारे खाने की हर थाली पर टैक्स लगा दिया है। अर्थशास्त्रियों ने अभी से यह कहना शुरू कर दिया है कि देश में सकल राष्ट्रीय उत्पाद की विकास दर 6 प्रतिशत से ज्यादा नहीं होगी। अब जब यह विकास दर 6 प्रतिशत और महंगाई 8 प्रतिशत से ज्यादा होगी तो देश में हाहाकार मच जाएगा, त्राहि–त्राहि होगी, यह भय अभी से लोगों को सता रहा है। अत: मंत्री जी इस

बेलगाम महंगाई पर काबू पाने का प्रयास कीजिए, वरना जनता सड़क पर उतर आएगी? उसके मन में सरकार के खिलाफ जो रोष है, वह बढ़ता ही जा रहा है। अभी हमारे सम्मानीय सदस्य श्री जय राम रमेश ने कहा,

उपसभाध्यक्ष (श्रीमती सरला माहेश्वरी): मैडम, फिलहाल आप अपने भाषण में कटौती कीजिए।...**(समय की घंटी)**...

श्रीमती माया सिंह: बस एक मिनट। जो कीमतें बढ़ती हैं उनका कोई पैमाना नहीं होता है कि कैसे पता लगाएं। लेकिन मैं यह कह रही हूं कि बाजार में जाइए, दुकानों पर दाम पूछिए, सामान खरीदिए, आप हमारे समय से उसकी तुलना किजिए, तब आपको पता चल जाएगा कि कीमतों में कितना अंतर आया है। एन॰डी॰ए॰ की सरकार में कीमतें क्या थीं और अब 6 महीने में कीमतें कहां से कहां पहुंच गई हैं। आप एन॰डी॰ए॰ की सरकार के समय में, अप्रैल, 2004 में सरसों के तेल को देखिए, यह प्रति टन 1650 था और अब इसकी कीमत दो हजार है। एक दो छोटी-छोटी बातें हैं जैसे,एल॰पी॰जी॰ गैस की कीमत, जिसके सिलेंडर की कीमत पहले 241 रुपए थी, लेकित अब इसकी कीमत 281 रूपए है। इसी तरीके से चीनी पर क्विंटल 1360 की कीमत पर थी और अब यह 1660 के भाव पर है। मेरे पास इसके पूरे आंकड़े हैं, मैं समय अभाव के कारण नहीं कह पा रही हूं। लेकिन मेरा इतना ही कहना है कि महंगाई बेतहाशा है। देश के अंदर मध्यम वर्गीय, निम्न वर्ग और गरीबी रेखा के नीचे जीवन-यापन करने वाले लोगों का जीवन बड़ी कष्टप्रद स्थिति में है। इसलिए मेरा सरकार से आग्रह है कि इस बढ़ती हुई महंगाई पर काबू पाने कि लिए वे सारे उपाय किए जाएं, जो हो सकते हैं। इस पर काबू पाया जाए वरना इस सरकार के खिलाफ... *(व्यवधान)*...

श्री राम नाथ कोविन्द (उत्तर प्रदेश): काबू नहीं पा सकते तो छोड़ दें ...*(व्यवधान)*...

श्रीमती माया सिंह: वह तो जनता स्वयं छुडवा देगी...*(व्यवधान)*... इतना कहकर अपना वक्तव्य समाप्त करती हूं।

उपसभाध्यक्ष (श्रीमती सरला माहेश्वरी): धन्यवाद माया जी। श्री अश्विनी कुमार।

श्रीमती सविता शारदा (गुजरात): मैडम, मुझो लगता है कि अगर सभी सांसद शॉपिंग करने जाएं तो दामों में थोड़ी कमी आ जाएगी।

उपसभाध्यक्ष (श्रीमती सरला माहेश्वरी): क्या आप जाती हैं?

श्रीमती सविता शारदा: मैं जाती हूं, इसलिए बोल रही हूं।

उपसभाध्यक्ष (श्रीमती सरला माहेश्वरी): आप भी सांसद हैं, जाती हैं न।

जल संसाधन मंत्री (श्री प्रियरंजन दास मुंशी): हम लोगों के पास पांच साल का पैसा नहीं है, इसलिए हम लोग शॉपिंग कहां से करेंगे?

श्रीमती सविता शारदा: शॉपिंग मतलब घर का सामान लाने के लिए।

प्रो॰ रामबख्श सिंह वर्मा (उत्तर प्रदेश): आपकी तो सहमति है मान्यवर।

उपसभाध्यक्ष (श्रीमती सरला माहेश्वरी): श्री अश्विनी कुमार जी बोल रहे हैं, आप सुन लीजिए।

SHRI ASHWANI KUMAR (Punjab): thank you, Madam, Vice Chairperson, for giving me this opportunity. I have heard with rapt attention a debate on a grave issue of national concern. I do not think there could have been a subject more serious, graver and more vital for the health of our democracy and for the health of our nation than this subject of price rise, is, and, therefore, I had hope that this debate would be a non-partisan debate. I am disappointed. I do not want to apportion blame. I do not want to make an intervention by way of criticism of a party or of my colleagues who have preceded me. But, I do want to make a brief intervention in order to draw attention one more time to facts that stare us in the face.

Madam, no debate can serve its purpose, no argument can be credible, if it flies in the face or in the teeth of facts because facts are obdurate. They are obstinate. They just refuse to go away. Even if we choose to look away, they will come back to haunt us. And, that is why, my esteemed friend, Shri Jairam Ramesh, when he was making his intervention—and some of the other friends across the Benches—did repeatedly go to the facts. And, I would, without repeating the facts only draw attention during the course of my submission to, at least, four principal facts that explain the reality of a marginal increase in prices. I will not run away from that reality. From 4.3 per cent in April, the inflation stands at 7.3 per cent. That somewhere it will impact the ordinary man, I cannot doubt even that. But I do not make bold to state that this Government can certainly not be faulted either in its exertions or in its intent. I must remind, with all humility, my friends in the Opposition that the slogan of *Aam Admi* was not a slogan for us, it was a matter of creed, it was a matter of conviction. And this Government came to power by going to the court of the people with welfare of the common man, that is, the *Aam Admi,* as the soul of its campaign. It is as much this soul; the soul of this campaign, the charter of this Government, that brought this Government into power. So, within six months I had expected that, at least, our intentions and our exertions would not be doubted. I am disappointed. Even here we have been faulted.

have taken steps; remedial steps and urgent steps to absorb the shock or the impact of the rise in prices. But before I tell this House and share with this House the concrete steps that have been taken by this Government to minimise the adverse impact of the price rise on the daily existence of the common man, I must draw attention to the inescapable reality, which is reflected in these facts. Madam, It is, by all accounts, an imported inflation, and I say so because 65 per cent of all inflation which translated into weightages of indices and I do not want to use technical terms-accounts for 17.5 per cent in the WPI index. And this is accounted by minerals, coal, petroleum and basic metals. In a country, Madam where 76 per cent of our crude oil is imported—look at the impact of the rise in the price per barrel of oil—from $23 to $43, a 190 per cent increase in the cost of imported crude from 2002 levels. How much have we adjusted? A mere 22 per cent. What has this Government done? This Government has subsumed or assumed to its own weight about 168 per cent of the price increase. Another indicia, LPG prices increased from $194 per metric ton to $467 per metric ton—a 140 per cent increase. And what have we done? We have adjusted prices not by 140 per cent, not by 40 per cent, not by 100 per cent, not by 80 per cent, but only by 17 per cent. Another fact, 9 per cent have been adjusted when it comes to diesel, as against the rise of 26 per cent. In october, 2004, the price of kerosene was $58.29 per barrel, as against $23.65 per barrel in March, 2002—a 147 per cent increase. What is the increase effected in this country? Minimal or marginal. Madam, the Finance Minister is here. I really, must compliment him because I have always believed that the most difficult job in a country like India is the job of the Finance Minister. Whatever one may do, it is not enough; but realising that the international scenario is leading to a situation where if the States were not to intervene effectively and purposely, there would be a much more intense pain and pressure on the common man, the FM intervened. What did he do? Instead of raising revenues and taxing people more, he absorbed the burden. Excise duty on petrol, which he could have raised or at least have kept at what its current levels were, were reduced by three per cent—from 26 per cent to 23 per cent. Excise duty on diesel was reduced by three per cent—from 11 per cent to 8 per cent. Excise duty on kerosene was reduced by 4 per cent—from 16 to 12 per cent. Customs duty on petrol, diesel, domestic LPG and PDS kerosene stands reduced by 5 per cent from their existing tariffs to 15, 15, 5 and 5 per cent respectively. All I intend to convey by citing these figures is that this Government has

been sensitive to the need for intervention, sensitive to the need for purposive, effective, meaningful and rational intervention. There could be an argument that something more could have been done. Of course, there is always something more that can be done. But, then, Madam, there is also a question of harmonising equities, of harmonising the competing imperatives. There is also an issue of inter-generational activities, My distinguished friend, the Minister of Petroleum, intervening in a debate on the other day, made a very forceful point and he said that the PSUs—the oil marketing companies, oil companies in the upstream sector involved in the exploration business could, perhaps, have absorbed more, but, then, what do we do with the need for continued viability of these institutions which are, in a way, the security of our future? Energy security is as much a national imperative as food security, as the prices of food stuffs. Unless we ensure that good economics is not always prostituted and suborned to transient populist rhetoric, we will not be able to lay the foundation of a strong and vibrant India. There can be no compromise on fundamentals.

Added to these, Madam, is another reality, the reality of excess liquidity in the market. Eighty thousand crores of rupees were the excess liquidity which we tried to mop up. and you don't have to be a profound student of Economics to know that in the classic definition of 'inflation', we talk of too much money chasing goods and services. When there is too much liquidity, there is bound to be an inflationary spell, and that is exactly what has happened. And that is why, the Finance Ministry undertook certain monetarist measures, macro-economic management, and I do make bold to state, as the hon. Finance Minister stated—and I have no reason to disbelieve him because he is the master of facts and all that he provide—-that there has been a marginal reduction in the levels of inflation.

Madam, with your leave, I would like to state only this, that the time for us to muddle through is over. We can no longer afford the luxury of political rhetoric when it comes to sound economic fundamentals. We are not oblivious, this Government cannot, be and is not, oblivious to its primary responsibilities. The leader of UPA Shrimati Sonia Gandhi, and the hon. Prime Minister the leader of the Government, have repeatedly stated that the first charge on the resources and the might of this Government is the concern for the ordinary man, the welfare of *'Aam Admi'*. As I said in the beginning, this is not an empty slogan or rhetoric for us. It is an article of faith for us, and we will deliver on it.

The hon. Finance Minister, in his reply, I have no doubt, will convince this House that all that could have been done has been done. But, somebody said, there is always scope for saying, 'well, this could have been done.' My esteemed friend, Shri Dipankar Mukherjee, made a strong point that the refining cost could have been more adjustable. My friend, the hon. Minister for Petroleum, said that that would have had an extremely marginal impact. Therefore, some presumption in favour of the Government ought to be granted in a democratic polity, that they know what, at a given point of time, would best subserve the national agenda. And I am sure, my friends in the Opposition are equally concerned about the country's future. They may have a different perspective, we disagree with them on a lot of things, we might agree with them on certain things. But on one thing let there be no doubt that this Government can, by no stretch of imagination, be faulted in its exertions. I must tell my friends from the Left that I came across this very compelling statement by Engles, who said, "Freedom is after all,the recognition of necessity."

How far are we free? Do we really have free choices? Does the situation admit of total freedom of action on the part of the Finance Minister? I know, left to himself, he would like to give everything to the common man, but he can't because he also has, as I said earlier, to reconcile competing, but equally vital, equities and imperatives of the nation. And the nation, Madam, has different priorities. In the national psyche, prices are important, and they will always be important. In fact, we have seen Governments come and go on the issue of prices of onions and food. And why should that not happen? It should happen. In fact, the first responsibility of democratic power and democratic governance is to ensure that prices do not rise beyond acceptable levels, because intheir daily effect these do impact on the common man adversely. But the question that we must ask under the circumstances is, is it an inflation of our making? Clearly, from the statistics that have been cited in the House, 'No'. It is an imported inflation if, at all, we have inherited a reason for the inflation, namely, excess liquidity in the market. In my respectful submission, the second important question that we must ask—because if you ask the wrong question, you will get the wrong answer and, therefore, it is important to ask the right question is: Has the Government of the day done enough; could it have done more? In my respectful submission, not as an economist but as a citizen although I see prices rising and I am concerned, but I

think, this Government has delivered both on its intentions and in its endeavours to ensure that the prices are contained and I have no reason, for a moment, to doubt the Finance Minister's assurance, who is in this House since morning, that he sees that the worst is over and on that note I would only like the Finance Minister to remember that in the ultimate analysis he would only be judged by what Loyd George while presenting his 1909 popular Budget said, "Let no cupboard be bare and let no lot feel an unbearable burden." With these words, I thank you, Madam Chairperson.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRIMATI SARLA MAHESHWARI): Shri Harendra Singh Malik. He is not here. Shri N.K. Premachandran.

SHRI N.K. PREMACHANDRAN (Kerala): Madam Chairperson, I would like to take part in the debate that already has all the statistics and logical arguments for rise in prices. These have already been illustrated in this House. I was also very eagerly hearing the arguments put forward for the recent price rise and inflation. Madam, every section of this House is totally concerned about the common men, the ordinary people of this country, which is the majority population of our country. Not only all are concerned, but even the last speaker, Shri Ashwani Kumar, has said that the Left is always demanding that everything should be given to the common and ordinary people, and the Government is also willing to share the view. We are well aware that the former Government, the NDA Government, was very much arguing that they were for the economic growth of this country and as a part of their governance during the last six years the country and the people were shining, and the 'India Shining' slogan was also there. But what was the reality that we have seen in the last elections? That is why in the Common Minimum Programme, as well as, in the UPA Coordination Committee,we have urged that the economic reforms should have a human face. So, we are still insisting that the reforms, whatever it may be, should have a humane face and the ordinary, common people have to be taken care of, whatever be the reforms which are being enunciated in this country or which have been implemented in this country. On that basis, we should discuss this issue. I am not an economist; so many experts on economics have already made their arguments and made their deliberations in a very good manner. The previous Government was always talking of the economic growth, the GDP growth rate of 7 per cent. The previous Government was very proud of it. What was the common people's problem as far as the

poverty and unemployment are concerned? The fruits of growth should reach the common masses. Are they reaching, or, are they benefiting the common people? The workers who are in the factories or in the agricultural sector, wherever they may be, losing their jobs. Unemployment is increasing and amenities for livelihood are declining. Starvation deaths are increasing in this country. So, the poor people, the common people, is not being benefited by the structural economic reforms which have been pursued in the last decade. This is our point. That is why for some programmes, which are common to us, we are still for them, and we are still demanding for the speedy implementation of those programmes. Here, we are also well aware of the fact that this is only a six-month term of the UPA Government and now the recent price rise is being blamed on the UPA Government. After hearing the speeches of the hon. Members from the Opposition benches, especially from the BJP, it is being projected as if everything has happened because of this UPA Government during the six-month period of governance in this country. We know what has happened during the last days. I am not going into that debate of six-months versus six-years. But, the point is that the worst affected people, because of the oil price rise or because of the inflation, are the common masses of this country. So, their problems have to be addressed. Here, I am not going into the inflationary rates, but it is mainly because of the two reasons. The price hike in the crude oil sector and its impact on the prices of all essential commodities because oil will be indirectly affecting everything and also because of the lack of good monsoons. So, how will it impact, or, how will it affect the price rise of essential commodities? It will definitely affect all the essential commodities. So, to overcome these difficulties, Public Distribution System has to be strengthened and it has to be enlarged. That is our main suggestion. In order to protect the common people, this System has to be strengthened. But, what was the situation during the last six years; I am not going to explain that. Actually, Public Distribution System was dismantled. So, if you want to protect and safeguard the interests of the people who are living below the poverty line, or whatever you may call it, the common people, the Public Distribution System has to be effectively implemented. Procurement of foodgrains and procurement of articles, products have to be made in a proper way and also distribution will have to be done in a scientific manner. Only then, some relief can be given. Anyway, we are in a globalised era. The price hike in the petroleum and crude oil in the international market will definitely have an impact on

our economy also. Then, the climatic conditions, whether it is drought or lack of monsoon, on which the Government does not have any control, also have an impact. In such circumstances, it is very important to extend relief to the common people or the poor people. This can be done only by subsidising or giving some concessions and benefits through the Public Distribution System or by some other means. So, that is the only suggestion which I would like to make. Price stabilisation should be the prime motto of the Government. That is also envisaged in the Common Minimum Programme. Living standard of a large section of the people is well known to everybody. And, because of the reforms in the labour sector, industrial sector and in various other sectors, many people have been thrown out of their employment and all these worries and issues are there along with this. If the prices are increased, they will not be able to adjust their living standard accordingly, especially the middle-class people. For example, if there is a hike in petroleum price or diesel price, definitely, family budget will be totally mismanaged and it will be totally inflated. So, every care and caution have to be taken keeping in mind these unforeseen incidents or acts which are beyond the control of the Government. Definitely, there should be a proper mechanism to protect and safeguard the interests of the common people through the Public Distribution System or by any other devices which the Government may promulgate in future. With these words, I conclude. Thank you.

SHRIMATI PREMA CARIAPPA (Karnataka): Madam, I can very well understand the difficulties faced by the common people due to the price rise, especially the people for whom it is difficult to make both ends meet within the limited sources of income. The Government does not take this tough decision out of sheer will. It is compulsion, economic compulsion that they have to impose some taxes and duties which results in price rise. I would like to explain certain reasons behind this recent price rise. The occurrence of drought, decline in agricultural production, increase in global crude oil prices, supply shortages due to truckers' strike, increase in international prices of imported commodities like crude oil, steel and edible oils, increased liquidity in the economy, etc., are the important factors responsible for rise in prices in the recent past.

5.00 P.M.

Madam, to a great extent, policies followed by the previous Government in the field of money market, and, the prices of petroleum products are also responsible for the present inflation. The annual point-to-point inflation in terms of Wholesale Price Index has come down from the peak level of 8.7 per cent reached on 28th August, 2004 to 7.3 per cent as on 20th November, 2004. The higher inflation in the current year largely reflects the rise in prices of fuel groups and manufactured goods.

Madam, we cannot forget the fact that India imports 70 per cent of its domestic requirement of crude oil. As such the domestic price situation is very much linked with the international market prices of petroleum. Unfortunately, the international crude oil prices have shot up to $ 50 per barrel recently putting heavy burden on Indian oil companies. The increase in the volume growth of oil imports was 7.7 per cent during April-July, 2004 as against 9.4 per cent in the corresponding period last year. But the growth in value of crude imports shot up to over 50 per cent this year as against 10 per cent increase in the previous year. This shows the pressure put by the international oil prices on the Indian economy.

I would like to highlight the fact that the Consumer Price Index, which takes into account prices at retail level, and, by which the common man is influenced, has not yet crossed the 6 per cent mark. Consumer Price Index for Industrial workers, which was 4.3 per cent in January, 2004 has gone up to 4.8 per cent during September, 2004. So, there is only a marginal increase. This has to be taken note of by those who are creating a hue and cry over rise in prices.

Prices of manufactured food products have gone up by 5.5 per cent during April-September, 2004 as compared to 8.5 per cent increase during the same period last year. Prices of foodgrains have declined by 0.68 per cent during April-September 2004 as compared to an increase of 2.21 per cent during April-September 2003. This shows that the poor people have been taken care of by this UPA Government.

Madam, the Government has taken timely steps to control the price rise. This includes reduction in excise duties on petroleum products, steel, cut in the tariff rates on many vegetable oils, and, reduction in the money supply.

On the whole, the present situation can be termed as 'imported inflation'. In today's world of liberalisation and globalisation, we cannot do much to

stop this imported inflation. There is a scope for reducing our dependence on import of crude oil so as to protect ourselves from such hike in the price of oil. Madam, I assure the hon. Members that the UPA Government will definitely look after the poor people in our country. Thank you.

श्री राजीव शुक्ल (उत्तर प्रदेश): उपसभाध्यक्ष महोदया, मैं दोनों सदनों के रिकॉर्ड देख रहा था और मैंने पाया कि पिछले 50 सालों में ऐसा कोई साल नहीं गया, जिसमें महंगाई या कीमतों में वृद्धि को लेकर संसद में बहस न हुई हो। यह एक परंपरागत बहस है, जो होती रहती है। ऐसी कोई सरकार नहीं आई, जिसके जमाने में कीमतें न बढ़ी हों और ऐसा कोई वर्ष नहीं आया, जिसमें महंगाई न बढ़ी हो। तो एक तरह से इस परंपरा का ही निर्वाह होता है, जब सदन में इस तरह से महंगाई पर बहस होती है। विपक्ष ने हमेशा वही आरोप लगाए हैं और कुछ कमोबेश वही सत्ता पक्ष की तरफ से जवाब आते हैं। जहां तक महंगाई का प्रश्न है, किसी भी सरकार की इस बात में दिलचस्पी नहीं होती कि महंगाई बढ़े या कीमतों में वृद्धि हो, क्योंकि इससे आम आदमी सफर करता है। हर सरकार चाहती है कि कीमतों पर काबू रहे, महंगाई न बढ़े। कोई जानबूझ कर ऐसा नहीं करता, लेकिन कुछ ऐसी मजबूरियां होती हैं, जिनमें अपने आप महंगाई बढ़ती है।

माननीया, पिछले कुछ दशकों से स्थिति यह हो गई है कि हमारी निर्भरता पेट्रोलियम पदार्थों पर बहुत बढ़ गई है। पेट्रोल, डीजल, ये सब चीजें ऐसी हो गई हैं, जिससे ट्रांसपोर्ट कॉस्ट बढ़ती है, सामान ले जाने का जो मालभाड़ा है, वह बढ़ता है। उसकी वजह से महंगाई पर बहुत असर पड़ता है। पैट्रोलियम प्राइसेज में जो इजाफा हुआ है, सारे वक्ताओं ने बताया है मैडम, इसलिए मैं आंकड़ेबाजी में बिल्कुल नहीं जाना चाहता।...(**व्यवधान**)

प्रो॰ रामबख्श सिंह वर्मा: इसका मतलब वे कंसर्न्ड नहीं हैं महंगाई की चर्चा पर। ...(व्यवधान)

श्री राजीव शुक्ल: हम कंसर्न्ड हैं इसीलिए बता रहे हैं आपको।

उपसभाध्यक्ष (श्रीमती सरला माहेश्वरी): वह जो बोल रहे हैं उन्हें बोलने दीजिए, वह उनका मत है। जो आपका मत है आपकी पार्टी से रखा जाएगा।

श्री राजीव शुक्ल: जो आपने बताया वही हम ला रहे हैं।...(**व्यवधान**)

श्री राम नाथ कोविन्द: यह डिबेट को डेनिग्रेट कर रहे हैं। मेरा इतना ही निवेदन है।

उपसभाध्यक्ष (श्रीमती सरला माहेश्वरी): मैं आपसे कहना चाहूंगी कि माननीय सदस्य पूरे सदन की तरफ से राय नहीं रख रहे हैं, यह उनकी व्यक्तिगत राय है।...(**व्यवधान**)

श्री राजीव शुक्ल: हमारी पैट्रोलियम पदार्थों पर इतनी निर्भरता बढ़ गई है कि उसकी वजह से

किसी भी सरकार की, आज ये भी होते तो उनका भी यही हाल होता, मजबूरी हो गई है कीमतों में वृद्धि। अब उस दिन जो बात आई थी, जो पैट्रोलियम मिनिस्टर साहब ने रखी थी, अगर मैं उसी बात को दोहरा दूं तो फिर वर्मा जी उठ कर खड़े हो जाएंगे। हमने जो बढ़ाया है, यह देखिए, अंतर्राष्ट्रीय बाजार में जो कीमतें बढ़ी थी, उनका 50 परसेंट तक उसको ऑयल सैक्टर की हमारी कम्पनियों ने अपने ऊपर सहन किया है और घरेलू बाजार में कम कीमतें बढ़ने दी।

प्रो॰ रामबख्श सिंह वर्मा: जिसको आज यह मजबूरी कहते हैं उसको उन्होंने चुनाव का मुद्दा बनाया।

श्री राजीव शुक्ल: किसलिए बनाया, वही बतला रहा हूं। जो उस दिन पैट्रोलियम मिनिस्टर साहब ने कहा था उसी बात को मैं बताने जा रहा हूं। लेकिन मैडम, इन्होंने क्या किया कि पैट्रोल की कीमतें अगर अंतर्राष्ट्रीय बाजार में 35 परसेंट बढ़ी थी तो इन्होंने 92 परसेंट घरेलू बाजार में बढ़ाई थीं। अगर डीजल की कीमत 40 परसेंट बढ़ी थी तो 116 परसेंट की वृद्धि उन्होंने की थी। यह फर्क है आप में और इस सरकार में कि जो अंतर्राष्ट्रीय बाजार में कीमतें बढ़ी।...(व्यवधान)

श्रीमती सुषमा स्वराज: फर्क केवल इतना है कि जब आप इधर थे...(व्यवधान)

श्री राजीव शुक्ल: सुषमा जी, वैसे आप भी सोशलिस्ट पार्टी में होती थीं।

श्रीमती सुषमा स्वराज: पता नहीं, आप कहां की बात कहां कर रहें हैं।

श्री राजीव शुक्ल: आप सोशलिस्ट पार्टी से बी॰ जे॰ पी॰ में आ गईं।

उपसभाध्यक्ष (श्रीमती सरला माहेश्वरी): राजीव जी, आप आपस में टीका-टिप्पणी न करें। मैं माननीय सदस्यों से कहूंगी कि आप अपनी बात...(व्यवधान)

श्री राजीव शुक्ल: इसीलिए तो मैं सत्ता पक्ष छोड़कर विपक्ष में आ गया।

उपसभाध्यक्ष (श्रीमती सरला माहेश्वरी): चलिए आप अपनी बात पीठासीन अधिकारी को सम्बोधित करते हुए करें। आप माननीय सदस्यों के साथ टीका-टिप्पणी न करें।

श्री राजीव शुक्ल: अब तो सत्ता पक्ष अपने आप इधर आ गया।

प्रो॰ रामबख्श सिंह वर्मा: जिधर आप जाएंगे, वह विपक्ष हो ही जाना है।

श्री राजीव शुक्ल: जब मैं छोड़कर आया तब आप विपक्ष हो गए, इसके पहले तो सत्ता पक्ष थे आप।

उपसभाध्यक्ष (श्रीमती सरला माहेश्वरी): देखिए, इस तरह आप आपस में टीका-टिप्पणी करेंगे

इस वाद-विवाद का कोई अंत नहीं होगा। हमें एक निष्कर्ष तक पहुंचना है।

श्री राजीव शुक्ल: वर्मा जी जहां रहते हैं वहीं विपक्ष हो जाता है।...(**व्यवधान**) सुषमा जी, वर्मा जी को हटा दीजिए।

उपसभाध्यक्ष (श्रीमती सरला माहेश्वरी): राजीव जी, मैं आपसे कह रही हूं कि आप चेयर की तरफ संबोधित होकर बोलिए।

श्री राजीव शुक्ल: वह तो लगातार टोक रहे हैं, तो क्या करें मैडम।

उपसभाध्यक्ष (श्रीमती सरला माहेश्वरी): आप उनकी तरफ ध्यान क्यों दे रहे हैं। मैं कह रही हूं कि आप मेरी तरफ देखकर बोलिए।

श्री राजीव शुक्ल: मैडम, ऑयल प्राइस की वजह से यह स्थिति आई है। जैसा कि सरकार ने कस्टम ड्यूटी और एक्साइज ड्यूटी में लगातार कमी करके यह कोशिश की है कि उन कीमतों पर काबू पाया जा सके और खास तौर से जो इस तरह की आवश्यक वस्तुएं हैं और उन पर किसी तरह की सब्सिडी के जरिए यह प्रयास किया जा रहा है कि आम आदमी को इससे कष्ट न होने पाए। मैडम, एक इम्पोर्टेंट बात इसमें यह है कि जैसे शुगर की कीमतों को बढ़ने से रोकने के लिए सरकार ने कुछ प्रबंध किए हैं जिसमें एथिन शुगर की व्यवस्था हो रही है और उसकी वजह से यह दिक्कत न आने पाए, इसकी भी कोशिश की जा रही है। नॉन-एलाइस स्टील पर 5 परसेंट की ड्यूटी कम की गई है और शिप ब्रेकिंग-जहाज को तोड़कर जो लोहा लाया जा सकता है, स्टील बनाई जा सकती है, जिससे कि डॉमेस्टिक मार्केट में कीमतें कम हों, उसमें 10 से 15 प्रतिशत की कटौती की गई है। मैडम, वेजिटेबिल ऑयल के टेरिफ में भी कटौती करके मदद देने की कोशिश की जा रही है। एक लगातार बात कही जाती रही कि जब से यह सरकार आई है, विदेशी मुद्रा भंडार खत्म होता जा रहा है, नीचे गिरता जा रहा है। ऐसी भारी आलोचनाएं हुई। मैडम, आप देखिए कि आज विदेशी मुद्रा भंडार में उत्तरोत्तर वृद्धि है और 125 बिलियन डॉलर से ऊपर निकलने की स्थिति में हम पहुंच गए हैं। कई बार मुझे ऐसा लगता है कि जो इंफ्लेशन है, वह बढ़ना नहीं चाहिए, लेकिन ग्रोथ के लिए कई बार एक सरटेन परसेंटेज तक इंफ्लेशन होना भी बहुत जरूरी होता है। आलोचनाओं के पहले इस बात को भी माननीय सदस्यों को ध्यान में रखना चाहिए। विश्व की तमाम अर्थव्यवस्थाओं ने यह साबित किया है कि जहां एकदम मुद्रास्फीति नहीं है वहां ग्रोथ नहीं है। यह बहुत महत्वपूर्ण पहलू है इसको भी हमें ध्यान में रखना चाहिए। मैडम, यूपीए सरकार ने तमाम रिफार्म्स की शुरूआत की है, चाहे वह सिविल एविएशन सैक्टर हो, चाहे टेलीकॉम सैक्टर हो और चाहे फॉर्म सैक्टर हो। उन्होंने कहा है कि इसके रिजल्ट अगले छह महीने में देखने को मिलेंगे। कोई भी सरकार छह महीने के अंदर जादू की छड़ी घुमाकर सब कुछ नहीं कर सकती है। उसका धीरे-धीरे सत्ता पर नियंत्रण होता

है। आज आप स्टॉक मार्केट देख लीजिए, होटल भरे हुये हैं, जहाजों में जगह नहीं मिल रही है। इससे स्पष्ट है कि अर्थ-व्यवस्था निश्चित रूप से उत्तरोत्तर वृद्धि की ओर है। उसमें कितनी बढ़ोत्तरी होती है, यह बढ़ोत्तरी कहां तक जाती है, यह देखने की बात है। आप थोड़ा-सा धैर्य रखिये, चार-पांच साल इसी तरह से इत्मीनान से, शांति से बैठिये, तभी सबको पता चलेगा कि अर्थ-व्यवस्था कहां से कहां पहुंच गई है।

मैं एक बात माननीय चिदम्बरम साहब से भी कहना चाहता हूं। आज जो इकॉनामिक रिव्यु आया है, उसे मैंने अखबारों में पढ़ा है। उसमें सबसिडी रिज़ीम पर काफी जोर दिया जा रहा है, बिल्कुल सबसिडी रिज़ीम को खत्म करने की बात हो रही है। मेरा मंत्री जी से आग्रह है कि इस तरह से नहीं होना चाहिए। हमारे देश में सबसिडी रिज़ीम को एकदम से खत्म नहीं करना चाहिए। अगर इसे एकदम खत्म कर दिया गया तो आम जनता, आम आदमी सहन नहीं कर पायेगा। तमाम ऐसे क्षेत्र हैं, जहां सबसिडी की आवश्यकता है। सरकार का सामाजिक दायित्व भी होता है। यह बहुत महत्वपूर्ण दायित्व है। इसलिए मेरा मंत्री जी से अनुरोध है कि वे इसको स्पष्ट करें, जैसा कि आज अखबारों में आया है कि सबसिडी बिल्कुल खत्म हो रही है, काफी कम हो रही है। मुझे आशा है कि माननीय मंत्री जी इस तरफ ध्यान देंगे। मेरे ख्याल से वे ऐसा कोई कदम नहीं उठायेंगे। धन्यवाद।

SHRI R. SHUNMUGASUNDARAM (Tamil Nadu): Madam, the first challenge, the UPA Government have faced is the inflation which is rising. The rise in inflation rate was despite the decline in prices of most agricultural and industrial commodities. The rise is attributed to oil spike. But the Government data shows that whenever there is a 3 per cent hike in oil prices, the weightage is borne by the other commodities up to the level of about 16 per cent in increase. Therefore, the Wholesale Price Index increases by 16 per cent whenever there is a 3 per cent rise in oil prices.

In the first week of November, we saw a rise in petrol prices and then within two weeks, the Railways increased the freight rates. The Railways being the carrier of about 30 per cent of the goods had to increase freight rates by about 7.7 per cent, that is what is reported, so that the spin off effect is felt by the public and the effect is being felt on all commodities. But the peculiar situation is that once the prices of petroleum products are raised, the subsequent cuts in petrol prices will not have any effect on its prices, and it normally stays at the same level. That is what the experts say. This is also because some of the companies, which squeezed their profit margins in the previous year, when they get profits at the normal level in the current year, they do not cut their margins and give concessional

prices. This also contributes to price rise. This is one of the factors, they say.

The Hon. Finance Minister and the Hon. Minister for Petroleum requested the State Governments to reduce sales tax on petroleum products. They have requested that, at least as a temporary measure, to moderate the inflation, there must be a cut in sales tax. But the hon. Minister for Petroleum informed the House on the other day that it was not done by some of the States. The continued high oil prices will have an impact on the growth of the Gross Domestic Product. The pricing policy of petroleum products on the basis of imported price was a decision taken in the year 1997 by the earlier United Front Government. That is what the other speakers have informed the House. It was the proposal mooted by the Narsimha Rao Government. Now, we see that the price rise is due to the imported inflation. In 1979-80, it was reported that the rise in oil price was about 50 dollars per barrel and that actually pushed many of the countries into recession. In 1990, during the Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, there was an increase in oil price and because of that, we had the oil price frozen at about 37 U.S. dollars per barrel and the situation in our country really worsened. When Mr. Chandrashekhar was the Prime Minister, we had to pledge even gold and that was the situation. In 1998, the oil price was 13 dollars per barrel and 2001 saw an increase of 32 dollars per barrel. The same year it also declined to 19 dollars. From 2002, that is what the statistics say, steadily there is an increase in oil prices. Therefore, the increase in oil prices, as I said, had a spin off effect on the commodities and the continued instability in iraq seems to be keeping the price inflated, and there is also a possibility that this situation will continue for some more time and, therefore, we can only expect that whenever the instability in Iraq is cleared, only then there will be a possibility of decline in oil price. Therefore, the Central Government's request for a cut in sales-tax by the State Governments has to be implemented and some steps must be taken in that regard. I can only point out one instance that I see from the statistics that the textile item which is the second largest group of manufactured products, they have remained firm in the current fiscal and I don't know why, when there is so much price rise, this has come to stay. Therefore, the situation cannot be attributed to the administration of the Government. I can say only about this. There are three factors that contribute to the inflation. Firstly, the rise in oil prices, secondly, late arrival of monsoon and scarce

rainfall, and thirdly, rise in prices of international commodities. With these words, Madam, I thank you.

श्री संजय राजाराम राउत (महाराष्ट्र): उपसभाध्यक्ष महोदया, मैं आपका आभारी हूं कि आपने इस सदन में आम आदमी की अहम समस्याओं पर चर्चा करने का मुझे मौका दिया। आदरणीय डा॰ मुरली मनोहर जोशी जी ने बढ़ती महंगाई के ऊपर अच्छा विश्लेषण सुबह किया था। उसके बाद यहां पर जो बड़े-बड़े अर्थशास्त्री हैं, जय राम रमेश जी हैं, दूसरे भी बहुत से लोग, जो इस विषय में बड़े-बड़े पंडित हैं, उन्होंने अपनी राय रखी। इस विषय पर लोग एक-दूसरे पर अंगुलियां उठाते रहते हैं, वह तो चलता ही रहता है। जोशी जी ने एक बात कही थी कि आदमी अब महंगाई में जन्म लेगा और महंगाई में ही मरेगा। यह बात तो सच है। रोटी, कपड़ा और मकान की बात तो होती ही रहती है, पचास साल से हो रही है, पीने के पानी का दाम भी बढ़ गया है। आम आदमी को पीने का पानी भी नहीं मिल रहा है। मैडम, जब अर्थशास्त्री महंगाई के ऊपर बाते करते हैं तो वे आंकड़ों की भाषा में बोलते हैं, बड़े-बड़े आंकड़े देते हैं, प्राइस इन्डेक्स की बात होती है, जी.डी.पी. की बात होती है। वे दिमाग से बोलते हैं, उनका दिमाग बहुत चलता है। लेकिन जो आम आदमी बाहर है, वह इनके आंकड़े नहीं समझता। उनकी जो भाषा है, वह भूखे पेट की भाषा है। अगर हम वह भाषा समझ लेंगे तो हम बड़े-बड़े आंकड़े नहीं देंगे। ये आंकड़े तो हम समझते हैं लेकिन जो 100 करोड़ जनता बाहर है, उनकी समझ में ये आंकड़े नहीं आते हैं। हम उस जनता की आशा और आकांक्षा लेकर इस सदन में आए हैं। हमें उस जनता की भाषा समझनी चाहिए। मैं मुम्बई से आया हूं। मुम्बई में आज-कल एक चुटकला सुनाया जाता है। जब किसी बच्चे के मां-बाप यह कहते हैं कि बच्चे की ऊंचाई नहीं बढ़ रही है तो लोग कहते हैं कि उसका नाम महंगाई रख दो, अपने आप हाइट बढ़ जाएगी। यह बात सिर्फ मजाक में ही अच्छी लगती है, लेकिन यह मजाक हकीकत बनता जा रहा है। जिस तेजी से रसोई गैस और पैट्रोल के दाम बढ़ते जा रहे हैं, उससे लगता है कि इस सरकार ने रसोई गैस और पैट्रोल के नाम बदलकर महंगाई रख दिया है। चुनाव के समय सरकार में बैठे हर नेता ने बड़े-बड़े वायदे किए थे कि हमें सत्ता दे दो फिर देखो चमत्कार हो जाएगा। लेकिन अब कहते हैं कि यह क्या मैजिक है? हम महंगाई कैसे कम करेंगे? हम मैजिक तो नहीं कर सकते। देखो, जनता के लिए तो सत्ता में बैठे हुए लोग भगवान ही हैं, चाहे मैजिक करो या और कुछ करो। रोटी, कपड़ा और मकान देने की जिम्मेदारी हम सबकी है। जो सत्ता पक्ष में बैठे हैं, उनकी यह जिम्मेदारी ज्यादा है, चाहे यहां के लोग हों या वहां के लोग हों। इन्होंने चुनाव के समय जनता से बहुत-बहुत वायदे किए थे, जैसे कि अनाज सस्ता करवाएंगे, मकान दिलवाएंगे और रोजगार की व्यवस्था करवाएंगे, अब चुनाव खत्म हो गए हैं। अब सत्ता पक्ष के अर्थशास्त्री दूसरी भाषा में बोल रहे हैं और ऐसा ये हर वक्त बोलते रहते हैं। जैसे मूंगफली के दाम बढ़े हैं, पैट्रोल के दाम, डीजल के दाम, चाय पत्ती के दाम, सब्जी के दाम, गेहूं, चीनी, खाद्य तेल और

ज्वार-बाजरा के दाम बढ़े हैं, इस पर यहां बहुत से माननीय सदस्य बोले हैं कि 6 महीनों में दाम कैसे बढ़े हैं? सभी के आंकड़े हैं, मैं इस विषय पर नहीं जाना चाहता हूं। जब भी पैट्रोल और डीजल के दाम बढ़ते हैं तो उसका सीधा असर ट्रांसपोर्ट पर पड़ता है, फिर महंगाई पर पड़ता है और बाद में आम जनता पर पड़ता है। अगर इसी तरह से पैट्रोल और रसोई गैस के दाम बढ़ते गए तो वह दिन दूर नहीं जब हमारे देश की आधी जनता भूख से मरेगी और हम यहां महंगाई पर चर्चा करते रहेंगे, जैसे कि पिछले पचास-साठ सालों से इस पर चर्चा हो रही है। महंगाई पर बात करना अब एक चर्चा है, यह एक फैशन बन गई है। यह चर्चा सिर्फ शब्दों में होती है। हम इस शब्द को मजाक में लेते हैं। जैसे जोशी जी रोटी, कपड़ा और मकान की बात कर रहे थे तो मुझे तो एक पुरानी फिल्म 'रोटी कपड़ा और मकान' का गीत याद आया। उसमें तीस साल पहले जो परिस्थितियां थीं, वे गीत में लिखी थीं, वे तीस साल के बाद भी आज कायम हैं। मैं गीत की कुछ पंक्तियां सुनाना चाहता हूं। गीत में यह लिखा था, एक हमें आपकी लड़ाई मार गई, जो हर बार लड़ाई होती है चाहे ईराक में ईरान में हो या कारगिल में हो, जब भी लड़ाई होती है तो यहां महंगाई बढ़ती है। एक हमें आपकी लड़ाई मार गई, दूसरी ये यार की जुदाई मार गई, तीसरी हमेशा की तन्हाई मार गई, चौथी ये खुदा की खुदाई मार गई, बाकी जो बचा तो महंगाई मार गई। पहले मुट्ठी में पैसे लेकर थैला भर शक्कर लाते थे, अब थैले में पैसे ले जाते हैं, मुट्ठी में शक्कर लाते हैं। गरीब को बच्चे की पढ़ाई मार गई, बेटी की शादी और सगाई मार गई, किसी को रोटी की कमाई मार गई, किसी को कपड़े की सिलाई मार गई, किसी को मकान की बनाई मार गई। जीवन के बस तीन निशान, रोटी, कपड़ा और मकान, ढूंढ-ढूंढकर हर इंसान खो बैठा है अपनी जान। सच बोला तो सच्चाई मार गई और बाकी कुछ बोला तो महंगाई मार गई...(व्यवधान)...

श्रीमती सुषमा स्वराज: नकली दवाई मार गई।

श्री संजय राजाराम राउत: मैडम, मैं एक बात बताना चाहता हूं कि इस फिल्म के नायक अभिताभ बच्चन थे। उस वक्त जवान थे, अब वे बूढ़े हो गए हैं, लेकिन महंगाई बूढ़ी नहीं हुई है, वह जवान है।

एक माननीय सदस्य: मनोज कुमार थे।

श्री संजय राजाराम राउत: मनोज कुमार भी थे, उसमें अभिताभ का एक छोटा-सा रोल था, उस रोल के बाद वे नायक, महानायक बन गए। अब बूढ़े हैं।

उपसभाध्यक्ष (श्रीमती सरला माहेश्वरी): अभी तो नायक जनता है, आप जनता पर बात कीजिए। फिल्मी पर्दे से हटकर जीवन के पर्दे पर आ जाइए।

श्री संजय राजाराम राउत: मैडम, यह बात तो है, लेकिन इस दौर में आने वाले भयंकर युग के

बीज छिपे हुए हैं। जहां तक स्वास्थ्य की बात है, शिक्षा की बात है... (**व्यवधान**)...

उपसभाध्यक्ष (श्रीमती सरला माहेश्वरी): संजय जी, कृपया आप समाप्त करने की कोशिश कीजिए।

श्री सजय राजाराम राउत: मैं समाप्त करता हूं। लोग एक-एक घंटा बोलते हैं, हम कभी-कभी बोलते हैं तो हमें पांच मिनट भी मिलते...(**व्यवधान**)...

SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM: You have said nothing on the subject.

श्री संजय राजाराम राउत: इसमें सब्जेक्ट है न। आंकड़े तो सभी देंगे, लकिन जनता की भाषा कौन बोलेगा?

उपसभाध्यक्ष (श्रीमती सरला माहेश्वरी): आप जनता की भाषा बोलिए।

श्री संजय राजाराम राउत: ठीक है, सभी जनता की भाषा बोलने की कोशिश करते हैं, हम कोई पंडित नहीं हैं, कोई इकॉनोमिस्ट नहीं हैं, अगर हम अपनी बात नहीं करेंगे...(**व्यवधान**)...

उपसभाध्यक्ष (श्रीमती सरला माहेश्वरी): बात कीजिए। जो बात है, वह कीजिए।

श्री संजय राजाराम राउत: बात यह है कि मैं सिर्फ एक ही बात रखना चाहता हूं कि शिक्षा से स्वास्थ्य की बात हो तो आज एक आम आदमी न तो सुख से जी सकता है, न मर सकता है। आज देश में चालीस-पैंतालीस की उम्र में बाप वी.आर.एस. लेकर घर में बैठ जाता है और बेटा नौकरी की तलाश में दर-दर की ठोकरें खा रहा है। ऐसे वर्ग की सारी आशाएं बैंक पर रखे डिपोजिट पर थीं, हमने रियायत दरों में भारी कटौती कर इस वर्ग की रीढ़ की हड्डी भी तोड़ दी है। मैडम, एक तो यह बात है और दूसरी बात यह है कि इस देश में नया रोजगार पैदा नहीं हो रहा है। लेकिन महंगाई और गरीबी से छुटकारा पाने के लिए मां-बाप अपने बच्चों तक को बेच रहे हैं, ऐसी बहुत-सी घटनाएं इस देश में आज सामने आ रही हैं। अगर आप महंगाई की बात करती हैं तो हम इस बात को नजरअंदाज नहीं कर सकते। मैं माननीय वित्त मंत्री जी से अनुरोध करूंगा कि अगर हम इस महंगाई और इनफ्लेशन की जटिलता को नहीं समझेंगे तो अशांति का एक युग तूफान बनकर आएगा और गत पचास या सत्तावन वर्षों से बना-बनाया एक देश, एक समाज पूरी तरह से ध्वस्त हो जाएगा और उसकी जिम्मेदारी हम सब पर होगी। धन्यवाद।

श्री बशिष्ठ नारायण सिंह (बिहार): उपसभाध्यक्ष महोदया, आज बहुत ही गंभीर मसले पर सदन में चर्चा हो रही है। जो वक्तव्य आए हैं, उनमें काफी सामंजस्य भी दिखाई पड़ रहा है। मुझे खुशी है कि जिन बातों को इस पक्ष के लोग जोरदार तरीके से कह रहे हैं, हमारे मार्क्सवादी साथियों ने भी जोरदार तरीके से उन बातों की अपनी तरीके से वकालत की है। इस सरकार ने भी माना है कि

महंगाई है। फर्क है दृष्टिकोण का और फर्क है सहमति के बिंदुओं को तलाशने का। उपसभाध्यक्ष महोदया, वित्त मंत्री जी के विषय में मेरी भी धारणा यह है कि वे एक विद्वान अर्थशास्त्री हैं और अर्थशास्त्र के तकनीकी पहलुओं पर आधिकारिक रूप से व्यक्तव देने वाला व्यक्ति आज भारत सरकार का अर्थ मंत्री है। महंगाई के संबंध में कुछ बातें कही जा रही हैं, जो बहुत ही कॉमन हैं और हमको लगता है कि देश को आज उस पर विचार करने की जरूरत है। आपने महंगाई से निपटने के लिए सीमा शुल्क घटा दिया है, आपने महंगाई से निपटने के लिए आयात में टैरिफ रेट कम किया है, आपने बहुत से स्ट्रांग मैजर्स उठाए हैं लेकिन मैं एक आग्रह वित्त मंत्री जी से करना चाहूंगा कि जब वे इस बहस का जवाब दें, तो इतना अवश्य बताएं कि जितनी जल्दी और जितना सोचा था, उस अनुपात में क्या उन्होंने महंगाई पर नियंत्रण पाया है? यह जवाब उनको देना चाहिए और आज यह जवाब देने की जरूरत है क्योंकि स्थिति अनियंत्रित हो रही है। आत्महत्याएं तो पहले भी हुईं लेकिन देश में बड़े पैमाने पर पहली बार आत्महत्याओं की खबर आ रही है। देश के सामने यह बड़ी विडंबना है कि एक ओर पढ़े-लिखे लोगों में और गांवों में काम करने वाले लोगों में, विदेशों में जाने की लालसा और मजबूरी पैदा हो रही है। और दूसरी ओर दिल्ली, मद्रास, मुंबई और कलकत्ता जैसे शहरों में देहांत के मजदूरों की संख्या बढ़ती जा रही है और वहां झोंपड़ियां बढ़ती जा रही हैं। हमने इफेक्टिव मैजर्स लिए हैं, सरकार ने कदम उठाए हैं, लेकिन यदि सरकार ने कदम उठाए हैं, तो पेट की ज्वाला को शांत करने के लिए विदेशों में जाने की भूख क्यों बढ़ रही है और दिल्ली जैसे शहरों में, इसकी चारदीवारी के पास झोंपड़ियों में बसने की मजबूरी लोगों में पैदा क्यों हो रही है? क्या अब तक हम लोगों ने जो नीतियां अपनाई हैं, इन नीतियों में तबदीली करने की जरूरत है या अब तक जो औजार अपनाये गये हैं, ये औजार क्या सफल सिद्ध हुए हैं? क्या अभी जो इफेक्टिव मैजर्स लिए गए हैं, क्या वे देश की अर्थव्यवस्था के संचालन के लिए पर्याप्त हैं? क्या इसको सुधारने के लिए, क्या इस नीति को नया रूप देने के लिए दूसरे तौर-तरीके नहीं सोचे जा सकते हैं? विश्व की अर्थव्यवस्था के लिए हमारा देश एक मार्केट है। विश्व इकॉनामी के चलते महंगाई बढ़ेगी, पेट्रोल, डीजल की कीमतें बढ़ेंगी और उसका भारत का इकॉनामी पर असर पड़ेगा लेकिन हम कहां खड़े हैं, इसके लिए कौन-कौन से नए उपाय खोजे जा सकते हैं, हम चाहेंगे कि इस ओर वित्त मंत्री जी ध्यान दें। अभी आयात शुल्क में कमी, इन सब अल्पकालिक योजनाओं की चर्चा हुई है। वित्त मंत्री जी को देखना चाहिए कि इस देश में इस तरह की स्थिति पैदा न हो, इसलिए आपको दीर्घकालीन योजनाओं के बारे में सदन में विस्तार से बताना चाहिए। आज उसी की जरूरत हैं।

मैडम, एक चीज साफ है कि प्राइस को नियंत्रित करने के लिए चाहे जो भी चीजें सामने दिखाई पड़ रही हैं, सरकार उसको नियंत्रित नहीं कर पाई है। हम धान का दाम तो निर्धारित कर देते हैं, हम गेहूं का दाम निर्धारित कर देते हैं लेकिन जो माल कारखानों में बनता है,? उस पर हमारा नियंत्रण है क्या? यदि सरकार दावा भी करे, तो भी क्या इस सत्य को स्वीकार करने के लिए कोई तैयार है कि जो भारत के बड़े-बड़े कारखानों में पैदा हो रहा है, उसके उत्पादन की जो कीमत है और मार्केट में

जो उसकी बिक्री की स्थिति है, वह उससे कई गुना प्राइस पर बिकता है। उसका प्राइस, डेढ़ गुना से ज्यादा नहीं होना चाहिए। सरकार के सामने सबसे बड़ी चुनौती यह है कि कारखानों में पैदा होने वाला माल, खेतों में पैदा होने वाला माल और गांवों में पैदा होने वाला जो सामान है, उनके बीच में सामंजस्य और संतुलन होना चाहिए, तभी देश की अर्थव्यवस्था में परिवर्तन की स्थिति लाई जा सकती है। जब तक दाम बांधने के लिए इफेक्टिव तरीके से और कारगर तरीके से कोई ठोस कदम नहीं उठाया जाएगा, तब तक यह समस्या नहीं सुलझेगी। मैं मुरली मनोहर जोशी जी की एक बात से सहमत हूं और शायद बहुत से लोगों की सहमति भी हो कि आज विश्व की अर्थव्यवस्था को अमेरिका की अर्थव्यवस्था नियंत्रित करती है और अमेरिका की अर्थव्यवस्था का मतलब डालर है और डालर उनके लिए ज्यादा उपयोगी है जिनके लिए जिन्दगी को बेहतर तरीके से जीने का सवाल है और भारत के लोगों के सामने जिंदगी जीने का सवाल है। जहां पैसा अधिक है, वहां पर तो जिन्दगी को बेहतर ढंग से लोग जी सकते हैं, लेकिन जहां आबादी के एक बड़े भाग के सामने जीवन को जीने का सवाल है, तो उसके लिए दूसरे तौर -तरीके अपनाए जाने चाहिए और उसमें अभी सरकार नाकामयाब रही है। हम यह नहीं कहते हैं कि 6 महीने मे कोई क्रांतिकारी परिवर्तन हो सकता है, लेकिन अभी तो सिम्पटम्स मिल रहे हैं, यदि यही सिम्पटम्स आगे बढ़ते रहे तो देश में एक भयावह स्थिति पैदा हो सकती है। भुखमरी से मरने वालों की जो रिपोर्ट आ रही है, उससे बेरोजगारों के अंदर असंतोष पैदा हो सकता है, हिंसात्मक गतिविधियां बढ़ सकती हैं और देश में एक ऐसी स्थिति पैदा हो सकती है, जो कंट्रोल के बाहर हो सकती है। इसलिए पक्ष और विपक्ष के केवल इस तर्क पर कि हमने बहुत सफलता से स्थिति पर नियंत्रण कर लिया, सरकार ने नियंत्रण कर लिया, तो मानसून पर बार-बार क्यों चर्चा हो रही है? मानसून आया और मानसून ने इफेक्टिव तरीके से इस महंगाई पर नियंत्रण करने में अपनी भूमिका को अदा किया। यदि यही मानसून भविष्य में इसी ढंग की भूमिका नहीं अपनाएगा तो इस देश के लिए बड़ा दुर्भाग्य हो सकता है। इसलिए हमारा वित्त मंत्री जी से विशेष रूप से यही कहना है कि इस देश में कालाबाजारी एक फैक्टर है, वितरण प्रणाली एक फैक्टर है और साथ-साथ जो ब्लैकमनी है, वह भी महंगाई से रिलेटेड है, कालाबाजारी भी महंगाई से रिलेटेड है और जिसके पास काला धन है, वह भी महंगाई से नियंत्रित है। इसलिए पालिसी के अंतर्गत हम रुपया को जरूर मजबूत करने का काम करें, अधिक-से-अधिक लोगों को रोजगार देने का काम करें और अपने इंफ्रास्ट्रक्चर को, जो अब तक चलता रहा है, उसमें परिवर्तन लाने का काम करें, तभी हमको लगता है कि इस देश में महंगाई पर नियंत्रण किया जा सकता है। आज इस पर व्यापक बहस चलाने की जरूरत है और हमको लगता है कि जो घोषणाएं सरकार ने की हैं, भारत के वित्त मंत्री चिंता जताएं और भारत के प्रधानमंत्री देश को ठोस आश्वासन दें और वह भी तब, जब से वित्त विभाग के विशेषज्ञ हों और उस आश्वासन के बाद भी महंगाई निरंतर बढ़ती जाए तो यह देश के लिए चिंता की बात है। इस पर सोचने की जरूरत है कि आज कौन-सी सहमति, कौन से ऐसे बिंदु इस देश में तलाशे जा सकते हैं गांव के आधार पर खड़ा करने के। हम नहीं कहते

हैं कि विज्ञान में जो प्रगति हो रही है, विश्व जहां प्रोग्रेस कर चुका है, भारत उससे अछूता रहे, लेकिन आज हम इतना जरूर कहना चाहते हैं कि अपने देश की अर्थव्यवस्था को नया स्वरूप प्रदान करने के लिए कोशिश करनी चाहिए। जमीनी वास्तविकता के आधार पर भारत का अर्थतंत्र बने, जमीनी वास्तविकता के आधार पर नीतियां बने, जमीनी वास्तविकता के आधार पर लोगों के बीच में मशीनरी खड़ी की जाए और ऐसी मशीनरी खड़ी की जाए, जो केवल राहत दिलाने का काम नहीं करे, बल्कि लोगों को खड़ा करने का काम करे। यदि लोगों को अपने पैरों पर खड़ा होने के लिए नए अवसर नहीं मिलेंगे तो देश के लिए एक भयावह स्थिति पैदा हो सकती है। मैडम, आपने घंटी बजा दी है और अब हमें लगता है कि तत्काल हमें बैठ ही जाना चाहिए।

उपसभाध्यक्ष (श्रीमती सरला माहेश्वरी): आप जमीनी वास्तविकता की बात कर रहे थे और मैं भी इसी वास्तविकता की बात कर रही हूं। आपका धन्यवाद। श्री तारिक अनवर साहब।

श्री तारिक अनवर (महाराष्ट्र): उपसभाध्यक्ष महोदया, मैं सबसे पहले आपको धन्यवाद दूंगा कि इस महत्वपूर्ण विषय पर चर्चा करने के लिए आपने मुझे भी अवसर दिया। उपसभाध्यक्ष महोदया, मैं शुरू से, जब से इस चर्चा की शुरूआत हुई, माननीय मुरली मनोहर जोशी जी के भाषण से लेकर विपक्ष के तमाम माननीय संसद सदस्यों की बातों को मैंने बहुत संजीदगी से सुना है। उन तमाम भाषणों में आंकड़ों के जरिए इस बात को सिद्ध करने की कोशिश की गयी कि पिछले 6 सालों में एन॰डी॰ए॰ की सरकार में सब कुछ ठीक-ठाक चल रहा था। यह बताने की कोशिश की गयी कि इनफ्लेशन रेट को नियंत्रित रखा गया, जी॰डी॰पी॰ बढ़ाया गया, समाज के तमाम वर्ग बहुत संतुष्ट थे, बहुत खुशहाल थे और 6 वर्षों में भारत बहुत तेजी के साथ विकास के रास्ते पर चला। यहां तक कि एन॰डी॰ए॰ की सरकार ने इस बात का दावा किया कि एक नए भारत का उदय हुआ है। इसका मतलब यह है कि पिछले 50 वर्षों में कोई विकास का काम नहीं हुआ, देश को आगे बढ़ाने का कोई काम नहीं हुआ, लेकिन पिछले 6 वर्षों में देश को बहुत तेजी से आगे ले जाने का काम एन॰डी॰ए॰ की सरकार ने किया। इस देश के गरीब भी संतुष्ट थे, किसान भी संतुष्ट थे, मध्यम वर्ग कर्मचारी और यहां चर्चा की गयी कि सभी लोग, उस शासन से पूरी तरह संतुष्ट थे। उपसभाध्यक्ष जी, अब जब सब लोग पूरी तरह संतुष्ट थे तो फिर लोगों ने वाजपेयी जी की सरकार को क्यों नकार दिया, यह सवाल उठता है। इस के पीछे एक ही बात थी कि जमीनी सच्चाई इस सब के विपरीत थी। इन्होंने उस समय जो भी नारे दिए, जो भी भविष्यवाणी की, वह गलत साबित हुई। महोदया, बड़े-बड़े पंडितों के द्वारा यह भविष्यवाणी की गयी कि अगर चुनाव होगा तो दोबारा एन॰डी॰ए॰ की सरकार बनेगी और उसी धोखे में 6 महीने पूर्व ही लोक सभा के चुनाव भी कराए गए। इस उम्मीद में चुनाव जल्दी कराए गए कि शायद दोबारा उन की सरकार सत्ता में आ जाए, लेकिन देश की जनता एन॰डी॰ए॰ की सरकार से ऊब चुकी थी, उन की अर्थ-नीति से ऊब चुकी थी, उन की कथनी

और करनी के अंतर से ऊब चुकी थी और इसीलिए जैसे ही मौका मिला इस देश की जनता ने अपना फैसला सुनाया और इस देश को एक नई सरकार, एक नई व्यवस्था देने की कोशिश की। उपसभाध्यक्ष जी, यह बात सही है कि जब नई यू॰पी॰ए॰ सरकार बनी तो उस के सामने बहुत सारी चुनौतियां थीं। महोदया, अभी पूर्व वक्ताओं ने जैसा कहा, मैं उसमें नहीं जाना चाहता क्योंकि तमाम बातें बहुत विस्तार से कही गयी हैं। महोदया, अंतर्राष्ट्रीय जगत में जो भी आर्थिक परिवर्तन आता है, उस का प्रभाव हमारे देश पर भी पड़ता है। हम उस से बच नहीं सकते, यह एक सच्चाई है। इसी कारण जब तेल का भाव बढ़ा तो चूंकि हमारी अर्थव्यवस्था में तेल का प्रभाव अधिक है, उसे हम नकार नहीं सकते, इसलिए जब सरकार ने इस बात का पूरी तरह से प्रयास किया कि तेल के भाव बढ़ने से हमारे देश की अर्थव्यवस्था को कैसे रोका जाये, उसे रोकने के लिए जो भी कारगर कदम संभव हो सकते थे, उन्हें उठाने का काम हमारी सरकार ने किया। महोदया, इस देश के प्रधान मंत्री के रूप में एक अर्थशास्त्री मौजूद हैं, डा॰ मनमोहन सिंह जी के नेतृत्व में और हमारे कुशल वित्त मंत्री के नेतृत्व में मुझे पूरा विश्वास है कि आज देश के सामने जो महंगाई की समस्या खड़ी हुई है, उस स्थिति से देश को निकालने का काम ये दोनों और हमारी पूरी सरकार करेगी।

[श्री उपसभापति पीठासीन हुए]

उपसभापति जी, मैं इस सदन का अधिक समय नहीं लेना चाहता। मैं इतना ही कहूंगा कि इस देश की जनता आंकड़ों की भाषा नहीं जानती है। और इसलिए हम लोगों को, यहां जो भी लोग बैठे हैं, चाहे वे सरकार में हों, चाहे विपक्ष के हों, हम सब की यह जिम्मेदारी है कि देश की जनता की जो आवाज है, जो उनकी कठिनाई है और जो उनकी समस्या है, उस पर हमको ध्यान देना चाहिए, क्योंकि हम लोग महात्मा गांधी के अनुयायी हैं। जब महात्मा गांधी के हम अनुयायी हैं तो हमें महात्मा गांधी की उस बात को कभी नहीं भूलना चाहिए, जो उन्होंने कहा था कि कोई भी नीति बनाने से पहले, कोई भी योजना बनाने से पहले, हमें इस बात का ध्यान रखना चाहिए कि जो समाज का सबसे कमजोर वर्ग है, जो समाज का सबसे कमजोर व्यक्ति है, उसे इसका लाभ पहुंचता है या नहीं। इस बात को हमें भूलना नहीं चाहिए। मैं वित्त मंत्री जी से कहूंगा कि हम तमाम लोग यही चाहेंगे, यह पूरा सदन यह चाहेगा कि आने वाले समय में देश की गरीब जनता जिस महंगाई से पिस रही है, जिस महंगाई से वह पीड़ित है, उससे कैसे उसको निजात दिलायी जाए, इसके लिए वह कारगर कदम उठाएंगे, ऐसा हमारा विश्वास है।

मैं इन्हीं शब्दों के साथ वित्त मंत्री जी से भी निवेदन करूंगा कि आने वाले समय में भारत को, इस देश की अर्थव्यवस्था को, ऐसे रास्ते पर लेकर चलें, जिससे आम आदमी का भला हो सके। धन्यवाद।

SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM: Mr. Deputy Chairman, Sir, this is a serious

subject and I have taken this debate very seriously. In fact, I would like to commence my reply by inviting the attention of hon. Members to the Mid-Year Review, that was placed before Parliament yesterday. Maybe, some of the Members have glanced through the very slim booklet, but I would urge the hon. Members to find time during the next few days to pleased read the review.

It is unfortunate that a very bleak picture is sometimes presented about how the economy is doing and, I think, that is a wrong attitude to take. Whenever you are in Opposition and whoever is in the Government, I think, one must take a holistic view of what is happening in the economy and then address ourselves to any weak spots. Clearly, I admit that one of the weak areas of the curent economic situation is inflation.

Let me begin by telling you how the economic is doinig. In six core industries, the growth in April-October, 2004, is 5.9 per cent, better than last year's growth of 5.4 per cent in the period of April-October. It is not only better than the growth in the corresponding period last year, it is better than the growth in the whole of last year, which was only 5.4 per cent. It is better than the whole of 2002-03, which was only 5.6 per cent. In every sector, except steel, the growth is significantly higher. Bank credit has increased by 30.5 per cent due to increased bank lending to housing, retain trade, power, roads and ports.

Someone mentioned that housing has been affected. I don't know how. In March, 2004, the total loans to the housing sector was Rs. 51,981 crores. In August, 2004, it increased to Rs. 62,483 crores. The increase in the period April-August is Rs. 10,502 crores. In fact, housing activity has vastly expanded in the last six months, not contracted. Total foreign exchange reserves as of December, 3rd stand at 130 billion dollars, the highest ever in India's history. I remember the day in 1991, when we had less than a billion dollars. The rupee is stronger today than when we took office. We all know the rupee reached even Rs. 44 to a dollar.The sensex has steadily grown. One the day I presented the Budget the sensex was 4847. In the morning, it was over 6300. Foreign institutional investment has crossed 8.2 billion dollars in calender 2004, again a record for any year since liberalisation. The point I am making is, the economy is doing well. It has done well in some years in the past also. For example, last year the economy did well, 8.2 per cent for which I compliment the previous

Government. But the year before, the economy was doing so badly at four per cent that one thought that one can never turn around the economy. On the back of four per cent, 8.2 per cent is indeed as impressive achievement, although I must say there is a bit of a statistical illusion there. The economy is doing well and I expect the economy to do better because figures of November are very encouraging and I am sure with the North East monsoon behaving well so far, the economy for the remaining period of this fiscal will turn out an impressive performance. However, inflation is a problem. Now, what is inflation? My good friend, Mr. Jairam Ramesh tried to explain it. I am not sure whether I will do better, but I will try. Inflation is relative prices. You measure the price last year and you measure the price this year. If the price this year is higher than the price last year, that difference, that increase is reflected in the inflation rate. I will give you some starting examples presently. But, if last year prices went down, say by 10 per cent or 12 per cent and this year prices go back to the normal level in the measure of inflation it will appear to be inflationary. But really, that is not inflationary. That is not bad. Suppose, for example, price of sugar went down or price of jowar went down or price of sugarcane went down or price of milk went down. Is that good for the producer? Milk producer will complain, the sugarcane farmer will complain, the farmer who produces jowar will complain. When prices come back to normal in the next year, it will appear to be inflationary because it is relative prices. But that is good for the farmer. That is why it is always being said that in a develoing economy, you must learn to live with some inflation and I agreed with everything that Jairam said. I am not sure, I agree when he said, 'we should tolerate six per cent inflation.' I do not subscribe to the theory that we must tolerate six per cent inflation. I think we should push inflation to below four per cent and if possible we should push inflation to below three per cent and still try to achieve a growth rate of seven to eight per cent. That is the goal of this Government. That was the declared goal of the previous Government too. In fact, we can't disagree on these goals. We can be different politicial parties but if nobody can disagree on these goals, while we must aim at growth rate of say seven to eight per cent and beyond eight per cent, we must try to keep inflation down to four per cent, if possible push it out to below three per cent. That is the idea.

Now, I have heard many hon. Members say some extraordinary things during the course of the debate. That, I suppose, is bound to happen in

any debate of this kind. For example, an hon. Member has said that we never discussed price rise during the period of the NDA Government, because there was never any inflation during the NDA Government. How does one make such a statement? I will give you the dates on which we had discussed. On the 9th July, 1998, there was a discussion on the price rise. Between 3rd December and 8th December, 1998, you discussed the price rise. On the 26th October, 1999, you discussed the price rise. On the 27th April, you discussed the price rise. What is worse to say is that we never had such inflation in the past. Mr. Jairam has given some figures. Let me add some more ammunition to it. In 1998-99 the first year of the NDA Government inflation crossed 7 per cent and remained so for four consecutive weeks between 3rd July and 24 July, 1998, and, again, for seven consecutive weeks, between 23rd October and 4th December, 1998. This was the first year of the NDA Government in office. But, then, when the NDA Government was in full flow, in 2000-01, when they ought to have gained mastery over the situation, as they claimed to have done, between 2nd October, 2000, and 26th February, 2001, for 22 consecutive weeks inflation was over 7 per cent. Inflation, in fact, touched 8.8 per cent in the week ending 15th January, 2001, and, again, the week ending 12th February, 2001. The point I am trying to make is, sometimes, because of certain external shocks, because of certain internal disruptions in supply, it is possible that inflation will cross 7 per cent. Inflation even crosses 8 per cent. The point is, what can be done in such a situation. Are we doing all that can be done in such a situation? Is there any suggestion which I have not followed, or, which I said that I will not follow, which helps in controlling the inflation? In fact, I listened carefully to the debate. There are one or two suggestions which I have taken note of. Therer has been hardly any novel or new or innovative suggestion which will help me control inflation. Let me, therefore, tell you what this Government has done and let me tell you what the consequences of those actions will be and then let me also tell you, quite respectfully, what can be done in the next three or four months. But, before that, I wish to deal with, if I may say so with great respect, some of the quite inconsequential or irrelevant issues that have been raised by hon. Members. For example, Sir, it was said that the Budget was inflationary. The Service Tax, especially, is inflationary. We should go back and look at the figures. The NDA Government, in the Interim Budget, projected Rs. 14,150 crores as revenue from the Service Tax. Suppose they remained in Government that would have been the Budget

6.00 p.m

figure. You would have raised Rs. 14,150 crores. Would that have been inflationary? Obviously, the Finance Minister of the NDA will say that it will not be inflationary. What have we done? We have kept the same figure of Rs. 14,150 crores in our Budget. So, if Rs. 14,150 crores was not inflaitonary in your Interim Budget, how does it become inflationary in our Budget?

Secondly, please remember, the NDA Government added 10 items to the Service Tax net in 2003-04. You had added 11 items in 2002-03. So, if you add 21 items, it is not inflationary. If I add 12 items, it becomes inflationary!There must be some logic and reasoning in these arguments. In fact, the rate was increased from 8 per cent to 10 per cent. But, please remember this 'but', immediately, we also introduced a MODVAT credit against 10 per cent on excise duty. Therefore, the effective increase is not 8 to 10 per cent. In fact, in many industries the incidence of service tax is lower today than earlier.

Another point was made by an hon. Member, I think from the CPM, that we ought not remove the quantitative restrictions. I don't understand this either. The quantitatives restrictions restrain imports, and, therefore, may contribute to inflation. The removal of quantitative restrictions allows imports and, therefore, moderates inflation.

The Member from the AIADMK made his maiden speech. I congratulate him and wish him good luck in his career as an MP. He said 85 items have been removed from the SSI and that has caused inflation. Eightly-five items have not been removed from the SSI. What has been removed is, the reservation for these eightly-five items has been removed. These industries remain SSIs, if they want to remain SSIs. Others can also enter this sector. They remain SSIs. And, an SSI gets an excise duty exemption up to production worth rupees one crore a year. He said, "You have imposed duty on bread; you have imposed duty on candle. I am speaking for the poor candle-maker, the poor bread-maker." I am reminded of what my English Professor used to tell me. He used to tell me, "Everybody speaks for the butcher, baker, candlestick maker." Who has imposed excise duty on candles? Unless your production goes beyond rupees one crore, there is no excise duty. I hope the hon. Member from the AIADMK

is not speaking for the poor candle maker; or, the poor bread maker who makes candles worth rupees one crore a year. There is no excise duty on candle or bread as long as your production does not cross rupees one crore a year.

So, I think, Sir, some of these issues are quite irrelevant. They have no impact on inflaiton. They have no place in a debate on inflation. They have a place in a debate on poverty removal. In fact, most of the suggestions that came were regarding how do you deal with rural poverty; how do you deal with urban poverty; how do you increase the income of our farmers. These are the real issues. And, that we will discuss when we discuss the Supplementary Demands because that gives you a large playgound to talk about anything that can be talked about. We can discuss those things, then.

Sir, there are three main causes for inflation. First one, whether we like it or not, it is simply because of the unprecedented rise in crude oil prices. Let me give you the figures. The average price of crude oil in 2003-04 was 27 dollars. The average price of crude oil in the current year is 37 dollars. That is an increase of 40 per cent. Now, any economist will tell us, if interational prices of crude oil rise, and we do nothing the prices will be transmitted to the retail prices. We are import-dependant to the extent of 70 to 75 per cent. So, when international prices rise by forty per cent that will be transmitted to the retail prices. Now, what has this Government done? An insensitive Government, a Government that has no concern for the poor, would have simply said, "We can do nothing. The international prices have risen. Therefore, we are transmitting it to the consumers." But we have not done that. In the past, the NDA Government behaved very differently. The international petrol prices, during the period of the NDA Government, increased by 63 per cent. but the NDA Government raised the retail prices, in India, by 93 per cent. The UPA Government, when I took office, faced an increase by 15 per cent, from January to June but we increased the prices only by six per cent. And, again, between July and December, we faced an increase of 22 per cent. We have raised it only by nine per cent.

Now, I come to diesel. During the period of the NDA Government, diesel prices, internationally, increased by 31 per cent. The Government increased retail prices by 197 per cent. Most of the price increase has ben absorbed by the oil marketing companies. In fact, in the current year, the oil marketing

companies will absorb a price increase of Rs. 20,000/- crores. And the revenue, for which I am responsible, thanks to you, I am absorbing a hit of Rs. 4,445/- crores! Now, tell me, do you want me to absorb more? I will do it. But, then, you should not tell me to provide Rs. 2,020/- crore for the Food-for-Work-Programme. You should not tell me to double the allocation for Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan. You should not tell me to double the allocation for the Mid-Day Meal Scheme. Where will the money come from? We have to balance this. Today, Sir, between the Government and the oil marketing companies, we have absorbed Rs. 24,500/- crores of the international price increase in crude oil. The remainder has indeed been transmitted, for which I am sorry. All I can tell the people of India is....*(Interruptions)*...

SHRI DIPANKAR MUKHERJEE (West Bengal): Rs. 4,500/- crores we have lost on account of excise and customs duties. This is one part. The other part is, so far as the customs duty is concerned, you have gained that it is Rs. 2,000 or so. ....*(Interruptions)*....

SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM: No: it is after netting out that. After netting out the advantage I gain in increased prices and after netting out the loss I make by cutting excise duties, net loss of revenue is Rs. 4,445/- crore. Therefore, Sir, today we have absorbed Rs. 24,445/- crore. The remainder has been passed on. You can debate and say that no, you should not pass on anything; absorb the whole. Another Government may say or another Member may say that you should have passed on a little more, and found a little more money for other programmes. But this is judgement, which the Government has to make. This is a call which the Government has to make. And this Government has made a judgement and a decision that we can absorb Rs. 20,000/- crore through the oil marketing companies. The revenue, the Exchequer can take a Rs. 4.445/- crore hit, the remainder has to be passed on. When oil prices decline - they have not declined yet. Oil prices have not declined. What you are looking at is the brunt prices which come on the TV ticket. We are looking at the Indian basket. The Indian basket of oil prices must decline sharply before we can pass on the reduction in prices. In fact, when they declined, petrol prices were indeed reduced because petrol was on import parity whereas kerosene, diesel and LPG are not on import parity. They are semi-administered prices. When oil prices decline, say back to the level of 2003-04, I am sure, the Government will consider this situation, at that time, and pass on the

reduction of prices to the consumer. When prices increase, it has a cascading effect,when prices decline also, it will have a beneficial cascading effect. As Mr. Reddy said, it is not the only villain, but it is the biggest villain in the play. The minor villains, I will come to in a moment. The biggest villain in the story is crude oil prices. Crude oil prices are raging, they have touched up to $ 56 a barrel. Therefore, as long as crude oil prices are reeling at this level, I am afraid, the Government has doen all that it can do. I do not want belief any other Government with a practical and responsible approach could have absorbed a greater hit than Rs. 24,445/- crore. The Minister of Petroleum has explained...*(Interruptions)*...

SHRI DIPANKAR MUKHERJEE: You are talking based on the product price on the international market. We are not talking about crude at all. Now, if the Government desires, if this Government can tell us that instead of semi-administered prices, if it had been an administered price as it was up to 2002, whether the price rise would be at the same range as it is now because you are having giobal price parity for the refined products. Though we are hundred per cent...*(Interruptions)*...

SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM: My learned friend, I have great respect for him, I am afraid, does not understand how the administered price system works. If prices were entirely administered, if the price system is entirely administered, you can fix any price, that is administered price ...*(Interruptions)* ...Just minute ...*(Interruptions)* ...Why? ...*(Interruptions)*...Administered price means, I can administer the price. ...*(Interruptions)*...Yes, what was there before 2002, I would have had to absorb the entire increase. The entire increase would have to be absorbed. Entire increase would have to be absorbed by the revenue or by the oil marketing companies. The oil marketing companies would have to absorb not Rs. 20,000 crores but several thousand crores more.

SHRI DIPANKAR MUKHERJEE: I challenge the figures which he has given as before 2004...*(Interruptions)*...

SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM: You can challenge it again and again...*(Interruptions)*...

SHRI DIPANKAR MUKHERJEE: No this is the figure. Because you are now calculating based on $ 51...*(Interruptions)*...

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Mr. Dipankar...*(Interruptions)*...

SHRI DIPANKAR MUKHERJEE: No, this is not correct..*(Interruptions)*...

SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM: Mr. Dipankar Mukherjee has challenged the Petroleum Minister. He can challenge me. I am standing by my figures. My figures are right and I stand by my figures. The point is he must understand how the APM works. You don't understand how the APM works. If the price increases, under the Administrative price Mechanism, I cannot increase it at all. I may absorb the whole price increase. That is how the APM works. The question is, we have a semi-administered price mechanism today, except for petrol. And, therefore, petrol is allowed an import parity. The oil marketing companies have absorbed the loss of revenue of Rs. 20,000 crores...*(Interruptions)*...

SHRI DIPANKAR MUKHERJEE: I stand on my figures...*(Interruptions)*...

SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM: You may stand on your figures...*(Interruptions)*...How can we resolve this? This is not a court of law...*(Interruptions)*...

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Mr. Dipankar, we are not entering into a verbal debate here...*(Interruptions)*...

SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM: Sir, this is not a court of law. This is not a court of law. This is Parliament. He has stated his point of view. The Petroleum Minister has given his figures...*(Interruptions)*...

SHRI DIPANKAR MUKHERJEE: But I am not passing remarks on your knowledge. But saying all these things is very off the mark. Without knowlege of Administered Price Mechanism...*(Interruptions)*...You said that...*(Interruptions)*...He should not make such remarks. That is absolutely not correct.

SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM: I said that you don't understand Administered Price Mechanism.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Mr. Dipankar...*(Interruptions)*...

SHRI DIPANKAR MUKHERJEE: Someone doesn't understand the Administered Price Mechanism...*(Interruptions)*...It is not correct.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Mr. Dipankar...*(Interruptions)*...

SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM: Sir, as he is entitled to criticise me, I am entitled to criticise his comment. I still maintain that my learned friend should please sit down with us and please try to understand how the Administered Price Mechanism works. If he understands how the administered Price Mechanism works, he will also understand what the Petroleum Minister said and what I say we have absorbed a loss of revenue of Rs. 20,000 crores which in a completely free and deregulated market would have been passed on to the consumer.

SHRI SANJAY NIRUPAM: What was the figure before 2002?...*(Interruptions)*...

SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM: We can't have a debate like this. You have to take my figures and reflect on that...*(Interruptions)*...

SHRI DIPANKAR MUKHERJEE: You are passing remarks on others' knowledge...*(Interruptions)*..

SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM:I am entitled to comment. He criticises me. I am entitled to comment...*(Interruptions)*...Rs. 20,000 crores would have, even at the completely deregulated system...*(Interruptions)*....

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Mr. Dipankar...*(Interruptions)*...

SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM: You make your remark. I am not saying it is ...*(Interruptions)*...

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Mr. Depankar, why are you getting...*(Interruptions)*...

SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM: He is entitled to make his remarks but he should not be sensitive if I point out that, if you understand the way the Administered Price Mechanism works, I can fix any price. I can absorb the whole of increase. I can absorb part of it and pass on part of increase or I can pass on the whole of the increase. what this Government has done is, it has absorbed, the oil marketing companies would have absorbed Rs. 20,000 crores by the time the year is over and the revenue has taken hit of Rs. 4,445 crores. The question really is, should we have absorbed more of the loss? Should we have absorbed more of the burden? I think there are serious consequences for that suggestion. If the oil marketing companies had absorbed more of the burden, then, their capital investment

would have been affected. Their expenditure plans would have been affected. Their market capitalisation would have been affected. Their ability to raise loans at lower interest rates would have been affected. There are serious implications if the balance sheet shows a far greater hit. As far as the revenue is concerned, should I have absorbed more? Yes, may be, I could have abosrbed more. But if I had absorbed more of a hit, then I would have less money for *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan*. less money for the food-for-work Programme, less money for the Mid-day Meal Scheme. So, one has to do a balance... *(Interruptions)*...Please. You can draw your conclusions. This is my view. We have to balance it. We have done a balance, and we believe that we have absorbed as much as we can absorb and we have passed on the absolutely unavoidable, inevitable burden to the consumer. As a result of that, there is an inflationary pressure on prices, because as everybody admitted, when fuel prices increase,there is a cascading effect.

Sir, the second reason why there has been inflation is the deficient rainfall in the South-West monsoon. The deficiency has been as much as 13 per cent. It is not quite a drought, but the 13 per cent deficiency gravely affected the khariff crop. When the khariff crop is affected — that has happened in two previous years — it gives rise to inflationary expectations. People think that there will be a shortage of foodgrains, there will be a shortage of food products and, therefore, there are inflationary expectations. Now, we think that most of this will be made up in the Rabi crop. The rainfall, the second monsoon, has been reasonably good. The storage figures in our reservoirs appear to be good. so, the Agriculture Ministry thinks that most of this shortfall will be made up in the Rabi crop, and when the seasonal factors play them sleves out at the end of this monsoon season — already vegetable prices are on the decline — and we have a good *Rabi* Crop, they would have a very beneficial effect on inflation; it will moderate inflation. so, the second reason is, deficiency in rainfall.

The third reason, and this is a rather complex reason, is liquidity management. Now, these figures have been given by Mr. Jairam Ramesh, and I think it is worth while repeating them. Last year, for example, the foreign exchange surge was 36 billion dollars. By itself, it is good to have foreign exchange reserves in a country, which had less than a billion dollars 12-13 years ago; that is a good thing. But it comes with a cost. If we do nothing, the rupee will get much stronger. That has some implications for exports, for exporters. Therefore, the Reserve Bank buys dollars. And when

the Reserve Bank buys dollars, it has to pump in an equivalent, Rs. 43-44 to a dollar; that adds to the liquidity. Now, what happened last year was that huge liquidity was injected into the economy. When we took office, the liquidty overhang was Rs. 80,000 crore. Now, I think, towards the end of the NDA regime, the Finance Minister realised that he was likely to have a liquidity overhang if he came back to power, or leave a liquidity overhang to the next Government! So, some steps were initiated. We have now in place a Market Stabilisation Scheme, and we have sucked in approximately, Rs. 50,000 crores of this liquidity. And then, by increasing the Cash Reserve Ratio, we have absorbed another Rs. nine thousand crore of liquidity. But there is still some liquidity in the market that is reflected in your reverse repo figures, which are published everyday, something to the tune of about Rs. 18,000 crore.

Now, this liquidity must be managed very carefully. I say with respect -- it is not meant to be scathing indictment, but a mild criticism -- that I think last year the liquidity management was rather poor. M-3 was allowed to go up to 16.6, whereas the targeted M-3 was only 14. This year, again, the targeted M-3 is 14 and we are well under the target, we are at 13.7. Unless we manage this liquidity carefully, there will be inflationary pressures in the economy. We are doing our best to manage the liquidity. But there is still some excess liquidity, and when more dollars come in — for example, in the week ending December 3, 3.75 billion dollars came into India in one week — more money is injected into the market. It makes my job, the Reserve Bank's job, of managing liquidity more difficult; it is a battle that we have to fight every week. And we are doing our best. But we will do our very best to ensure that M-3 remains at about 14 per cent of slightly under 14 per cent. If we manage out liquidity, I think we can moderate inflation.

These are the three main reasons for inflation. Now, there are some commodities which are causing some concern and I will certainly look at what we can do about it. But let me quickly run you through a few other things, which I thought I should say. People said that all prices have gone up. That is not correct. Let us look at the prices of 25th November, 2003 and 25th November, 2004. Let us take, say, a city like Delhi. Rice was Rs. 12 a kilo. It is now Rs. 13 a kilo. But in Calcutta and Chennai, it is steady. Wheat is steady; *atta* is steady; gram *dal* is steady. Groundnut oil

has declined from Rs. 88 to Rs. 84. Mustard oil has declined from Rs. 62 to Rs. 56. I am only looking at Delhi figures for comparison. I also have the figures fo comparison. I also have the figures of other cities. Tea is steady; milk has increased by Rs. 1; onions are steady and; salt is steady.

SHRI BASHISTHA NARAIN SINGH: What about garlic?

SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM: I am coming to that. I am glad that you admit your love for garlic. In *arhar dal,* there has been a price rise; in sugar, there has been a price rise; in Vanaspati, there has been a price rise, and in potato - because of drought and floods in some parts, firstly drought and then floods — there has been a price rise. I am not denying that. In fact, another hon. Member gave a longer list. In some commodities, prices have increased and in some commodities prices have declined. But even in commodities where prices have increase, as I said a little while ago, since inflation measures relative prices, in some commodities prices declined last year, and this year the rise is to restore the decline in price. But it will get reflected in inflation, although it is good for the producer. For example, tea prices declined last year by 16 per cent. Is that good for the tea garden? Is that good for the tea worker? This year, prices have come back to normal. That is good for the tea garden, good for the tea producer but bad for inflationary figures. Potato prices declined last year by 55 per cent.This year, they come back to normal prices. But, in inflation, it will appear to be a sharp rise in inflation. *Gur* prices declined last year by 6.83 per cent. They have shown a much higher increase, and we are looking into that. I am going to look into these items.

SHRI PENUMALLI MADHU (Andhra Pradesh): These differences are not visible.

SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM: This is a problem. You are discussing it in a vacuum. I am discussing it.... (*Interruptions*) .. Tea garden people complain to us when tea price decline. Please understand it. Talk to the M.P. from Assam, talk to the M.P. from Bengal, he will tell you. I have to protect the interests of tea producers also. I have to protect the interests of farm producers also. Now we are looking at jowar, groundnut oil, sugar, cooking coal, tea *gur* and potatoes. On these commodities, we are keeping a close watch, and I will take whatever measures are required to be taken in consultation with the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Food to see that these prices moderate. Some of these things are not importable.

Can I import potatoes? I cannot import potatoes. Can I import jowar? From where can I import jowar? Some of these are not, in that sense, internationally tradable. So, imports will not help. We have to ensure that there is enough supplies within the domestic market; there are no supply side constraints, and there are no bottlenecks. But, I think, many of these are seasonal price increases. As this monsoon comes to an end, then the seasonal factors will play out. I am confident that these prices will moderate. I assure that House that we will take a close look at these commodities and see what can be done to moderate prices. Sir, when we look at WPI — as Jairamji said — that is the only measure we have to debate, and I have no criticim about the measure. After the Rangarajan Committee's Report, we have appointed a Working Group under Dr. Abhijit Sen. They are now going to construct or suggest to construct a new index which will measure inflation data. So, action is being taken on the Rangarajan Committee Report. When we look at WPI, please remember that WPI is a much wider constructed index. It does not quite reflect the price effct on the "common men", the industrial worker of the industrial labourer. Within WPI, there is a WPI for essential commodities. There is also a WPI for the food group. There is CPI for industrial worker and CPI for agricultural labourer. Now, if you take WPI for all commodities, surely, there is an increase, if went up to, as I said, 8.5 per cent in August; it has since come down to 7.3 per cent. But, if you look at WPI for essential commodities, it went up to only a high of 5.7 per cent. That WPI for the food group went up to a high of only 5 per cent. The point I am trying to make is in terms of effect on the common man, even looking at WPI, since food accounts for most of his consumption, the impact on the common man, even by the WPI, is only about five per cent. If you look at the CPI index, the increase is 4.6 per cent. I am not saying that 4.6 per cent is good or five per cent is good, I would like 4.6 per cent to be 2.6 per cent. I would like five to be three. But, please don't be swayed by the fact that WPI index is showing 7.3 per cent, that includes a basket of articles which the common man does not consume. If you look at his basket of consumption, I think, in my respectful submission, the inflationary burden on him is approximately five to five-and-a-half per cent. Even that is unacceptable. I think, it should be lower. And, we will do our best to bring it down. Some of these things are beyond my control. Crude prices are beyond my control. I pray every day that crude prices should come down. The deficient monsoon was beyond our

control. I think, some of our prayers have been answered, the North-East monsoon is a good monsoon and, I think, we will have a good *rabi* crop. As far as liquidity management is concerned, I think, it is in the safe hands. We have a Prime Minister who understands this subject very well; we have a Governor in the Reserve Bank who understands this subject very well. Between the two, they will guide me and I think we will be able to manage the liquidity, we will ensure that liquidity-induced inflation is avoided. We are doing our best, Sir. And, I pomise we will dry to do better. Thank you, Sir.

GOVERNMENT BILL

The Delegated Legislation Provisions (Amendment) Bill, 2004

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Now, we will take up the Delegated Legislation Provisions (Amendment)Bill, 2004. Shri H.R. Bhardwaj.

THE MINISTER OF LAW AND JUSTICE (SHRI H.R. BHARDWAJ): Sir, I move:

'That the Bill to amend certain Acts to implement the recommendations of the Committees on Subordinate Legislation regarding publication and laying of rules and other delegated legislation, be taken into consideration.'

Sir, you are aware that the Committees of Parliament on Subordinate Legislation have been emphasising on the administrative Ministries that a standard provision be made for laying the rules in all the Acts of Parliament. There were two exercises earlier - in 1983, where 50 laws were covered, and another exercise in 1985 where 91 enactments were covered. This third exercise will cover 54 remaining Act. So, by this exercise, we will be almost completing all laws in the matter of laying standard rules on the Table of the House. This is a small measure, Sir, and I hope this house will pass it without any discussion.

The question was proposed

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: This question is: